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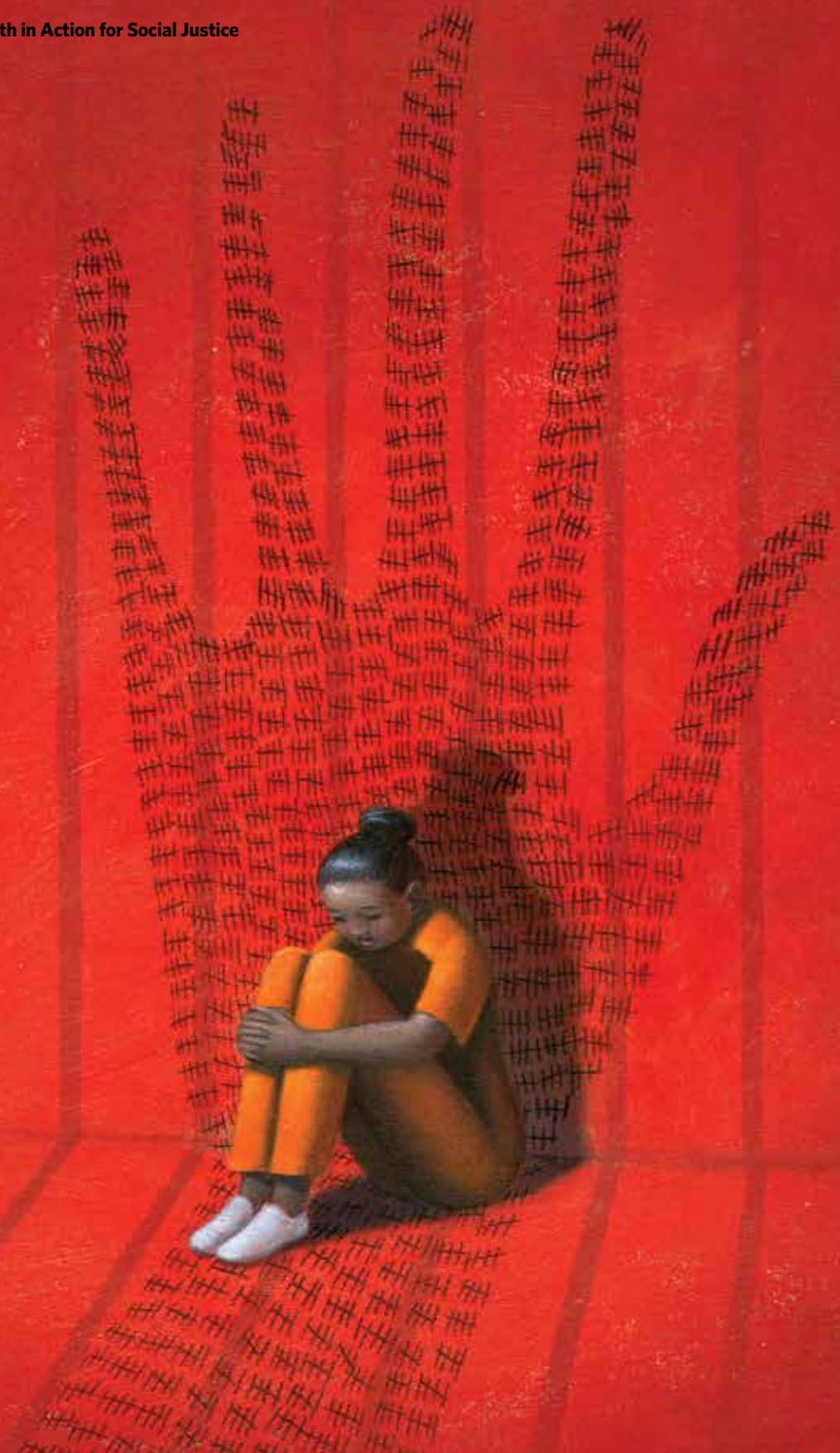
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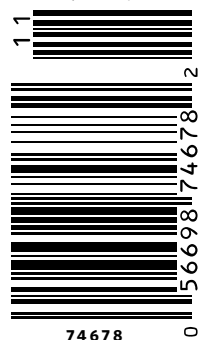
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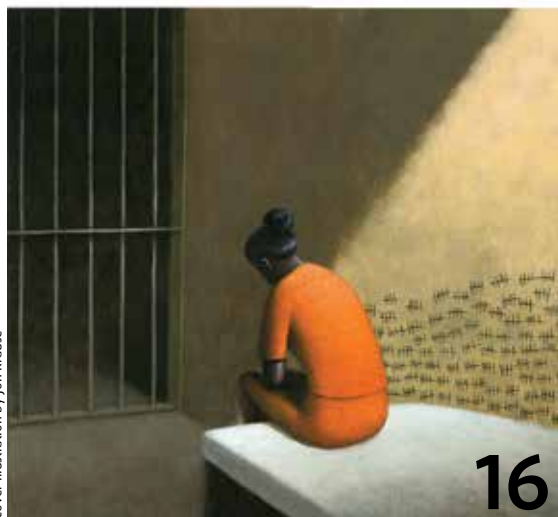
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IT'S NOT ONE of the Bible stories people often talk about. The tragedy of Tamar, a young woman who was raped by her half-brother and told to “be quiet” while those in authority refused to seek justice on her behalf, is recounted in 2 Samuel 13. We learn in scripture that Tamar became “a desolate woman.”

Bresha Meadows is another young woman who was molested by a family member and forced to suffer in silence. For years, Bresha endured “unrelenting abuse” at the hands of her father. Twice, Bresha ran away to her aunt’s house to escape; twice, Bresha’s aunt took her to Child Protective Services to report the abuse; and twice CPS said there was nothing they could do. Later, in a desperate act of survival, the then-14-year-old shot and killed her father. She was arrested and charged with aggravated murder. Bresha’s

case points to an alarming trend: “Almost every teenage girl in the juvenile detention system has endured family violence before entering the system,” writes Sojourners women and girls campaign associate Jenna Barnett.

As people of faith, what is our responsibility to girls and young women who suffer abuse, lash out, and wind up in prison? In the eyes of the criminal justice system, these girls are violent criminals who get what they deserve. Many of these young women become subject to mandatory sentencing laws that impose harsh punishments for those convicted of



crimes—even crimes committed by juveniles in abusive situations. But as Barnett reminds us in our cover story, no one is ever beyond the reach of God’s love—or our compassion.

As we went to print with this issue, the Trump administration announced it was ending

the DACA program, threatening to deport 800,000 people who were brought to the U.S. as children. Immigrants of all types have been under attack by this administration and, as Dhanya Addanki explains in “Safe House,” churches across the country have opened their doors in response. ■

Letters

A Confidence Betrayed

Sojourners has inadvertently contributed to the betrayal of Mother Teresa (“The Paradoxes of Mother Teresa,” by Dean Nelson, September-October 2017). In letters to her spiritual advisers in the church, Mother Teresa revealed a dramatic and troubling turn in her relationship with God. When she became famous, she repeatedly asserted that she did not want the contents of those letters made public, even after her death. Those in positions of trust betrayed her confidence by publishing a book based on her letters. The letters revealed that, despite her doubts, she remained committed to God’s work. While this may be inspiring to others, as her betrayers had hoped, that does not justify violating her confidence. It was not their decision to make. Let us respectfully leave it alone.

Arden Mahlberg
Madison, Wisconsin

Elevating Conversation

Kathy Khang’s column (“Distress Signal”) in the August 2017 issue resonated with me. Since the 2016 election, I have been wearing my small American flag lapel pin upside down. I am 88 and living in a senior community, so there are lots of elevator

God expects all of earth’s inhabitants to protect this precious gift.

encounters. Those who notice my quiet protest react in one of two ways: Kindred spirits smile and give me a thumbs-up, while others point out that my flag is upside-down (and may even try to change it). This provides a chance to explain, with a smile, the intent and meaning of my pin—a tiny educational opportunity. Your article spoke to my present condition. Thank you.

Priscilla Gifford
Boulder, Colorado

Attention, Earthly Inhabitants

In response to the column by Jim Wallis (“Forget Paris”) in the August 2017 issue, I would like to ask all of us who read this magazine to take it upon ourselves to pray daily and put pressure on local, state, and federal representatives to pass whatever resolutions or laws are necessary to provide global and local care for the environment of our home, the earth. Let us not forget that, from the beginning, God’s expectation was that Adam and Eve and all earthly inhabitants to follow would protect this precious gift. Therefore, I

encourage all Christians to take the responsibility of praying daily for this commitment to be met.

Karen McDonald
Elkridge, Maryland

Corrections: Jason Byassee’s profile of Tony McAleer (“Confessions of a Former White Supremacist”) in our August 2017 issue used an incorrect name for the Ulster Volunteer Force and mistakenly referred to a “Canadian veteran of the war in Afghanistan”; the veteran was from the U.S. In addition, members of McAleer’s team, but not McAleer himself, took part in meetings with a local imam, and the former extremist that McAleer described as meeting a woman who had lost her leg to a bomb was a member of the IRA, not the Ulster Orangemen.

“I have something to say about that!” Write to letters@sojo.net or Letters, Sojourners, 408 C Street NE, Washington, DC 20002. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.

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BY JIM WALLIS

White 'Heritage' vs. the Gospel



MONUMENTS TO the heroes of the Confederacy that stood for decades in Southern parks and streets went unnoticed by many white people, but black Americans have always experienced them as insults and threats. Since Charlottesville, whether to take them down has become the focus of a national debate. After the white supremacist “Unite the Right” rally in August, cities across the former Confederacy and in border states—including Baltimore, Durham, N.C., and even Richmond, Va., the Confederate capital—have taken action or indicated plans to relocate their monuments.

The argument made by proponents of keeping Confederate statues in place—that they represent Southern heritage and we must not “erase history”—is patently false when one looks at

the Civil War and ever since.

Defenders of the monuments also contend that local communities should decide whether their statues remain or not. But several state legislatures in Southern states, afraid of their increasingly diverse urban populations doing precisely that, have passed statewide laws to prevent historical monuments from being moved without state approval. What the monument defenders are actually insisting upon is *white* approval to remove them.

Perhaps the only appropriate place for memorials and monuments to Confederate leaders would be museums about the Civil War that properly frame the conflict for what it was—a war started and ultimately lost by states that rebelled against their country because they wanted to keep the evil institution of slavery and maintain white superiority.

The best idea would be to not merely *remove* the Confederate monuments but to *replace* the newly vacated spaces in parks and public squares with markers to the evil of slavery, such as the horrific sites of slave auctions and lynching, to remind us what people did to other human beings and must never do again. Bryan Stevenson’s Equal Justice Initiative, for instance, is building a memorial to the victims of lynching across the U.S. The Memorial to Peace and Justice, in Montgomery, Ala., will focus national attention on the evil done to people created in the image of God. New statues could celebrate the end of slavery and honor those who fought against it—black and white—and depict famous black Southerners who helped to turn their nation around.

In Germany, they don’t build statues of Hitler or monuments to honor him and other Nazis.

Instead, they have converted many of the death camps into museums, where people can learn about the Holocaust in the hope that learning the awful lessons of history will help us to avoid repeating them. Such is also the case in South Africa today, where every visitor is exposed to museums and markers of racial apartheid—not celebrated, but remembered as a moral failure.

WE NEED TO LEARN from the evil of U.S. slavery and the lie of racial superiority that is still with us. But to learn from it, we must first acknowledge the moral evil of slavery and the Confederate cause, and not seek to justify it as “heritage.” Such “honors” are incompatible with a society that values all its members and treats them as children of God.

Most important for Christians is to publicly assert that monuments to Confederate leaders are antithetical to the gospel message. These monuments to white supremacy deny the biblical truth that all human beings are created in the image of God and are thus to be treated as equal. They also deny Paul’s epistle to the Galatians, in which he affirms that “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus” (3:28).

As Christians, we are called to support public policies that conform to what God has taught us about right and wrong. The dismantling of white supremacy in all its forms is itself a monumental task, but removing and replacing the literal physical monuments to this evil is a necessary and overdue step in the right direction. ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners magazine.

In Germany, they don’t build statues of Hitler or monuments to honor Nazis.

why the monuments were erected. Most Confederate monuments were built during the Jim Crow era of the early 1900s and as a backlash to the civil rights movement in the 1950s and ’60s. They were never just about history or heritage, but rather were meant as a sign of resistance to black citizenship in America and a clear signal threatening terror against African Americans.

These monuments were built explicitly in defense of segregation and to glorify white supremacy. As such, they are and were always meant to be a racial rejection and assault to every black American who had to walk in their shadows, as well as all who fought to end slavery and discrimination during



A worship service
at Primitive Christian Church
in New York City.

Associated Press

By Aida Isela Ramos

The Rise of Latino Protestants

By 2030, half of the Latinos in the U.S. will be Protestant.

DURING ONE OF my first visits to a church in San Antonio for the Latino Protestant Congregations Project, the pastor invited a church member to speak about his experience in a federal immigration detention center. An elderly gentleman rose from his seat with a Bible tucked under his arm. For the next hour, this man, a Salvadoran undocumented immigrant, told his story.

He had been handed over to immigration officials after a minor traffic violation and was transferred to one of the largest detainment centers in south Texas. Without being overtly political, he stated matter-of-factly the conditions he endured at the overpopulated detention center, including the loud crying by men in the cells next to him throughout the night. His case for amnesty looked grim. He prepared mentally for deportation to El Salvador, a place he had left to escape violence.

Then he remembered Peter's imprisonment in Acts 12 and decided to start a Bible study for male detainees. He was given

permission to preach twice a day. He said that 150 detainees attended his gatherings and 58 converted to the gospel. On hearing this, the congregation erupted in applause and cheers of "Hallelujah!"

This church had worked tirelessly to get him released. They raised money to pay court fees, hire an attorney, and sup-

**Some prefer not to
label advocacy work
as "political."**

port his spouse. Endless phone calls were made to track down his records in El Salvador. Local leaders vouched for his character. The church's efforts were eventually rewarded with his release. He—and they—understood his release as nothing short of a miracle. This Latino Protestant church provided him a platform to humanize his traumatic experience. While not

intentionally political, his testimony carried political implications.

This is just one example of the many ways Latino Protestant congregations approach political and social engagement.

Beyond immigration, Latino Protestant congregations focus on a wide range of social issues. For example, in Oakland, Calif., churches advocate for affordable housing amid gentrification. In San Jose, congregations work to end gang violence. In San Antonio, they provide college scholarships and fresh produce in poor neighborhoods.

BY 2030, according to researchers, half of the Latinos in the U.S. will be Protestant. Latino Protestant churches are growing and parachurch organizations are expanding. This remarkable growth is not just about numbers, it's about people, and so in 2013, my colleagues and I initiated a multiyear ethnographic study to gather qualitative data on Latino Protestantism.

The political and social actions taken on

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by the congregations we studied are shaped by their contexts. Often, congregations engage with issues they face daily, although some prefer not to label this advocacy work as “political.” Other Latino Protestant congregations completely avoid political hot topics. For example, a Southern Baptist congregation in Texas decided to drop the word “Hispanic” from its name because the term was deemed too political and racially divisive. This change was led by the pastor, who saw “political” issues as a distraction from the church’s mission.

We found that religious traditions and theological orientations played an important role in shaping the type of political and

social engagement churches took up. They were not homogenous in their approach.

Faith-rooted social action will continue to be important in Latino Protestant congregations, particularly in a time of intensified immigration enforcement and continued socioeconomic inequality. Under the Trump administration, it’s likely that some Latino Protestants will gravitate toward stronger political stances and some will seek to eschew them altogether. ■

Aida Isela Ramos is an assistant professor of sociology at George Fox University in Oregon and co-author of Latino Protestants in America: Growing and Diverse.

By Anna Ikeda

A Step Toward a Nuclear-Free World

North Korea reminds us why nuclear weapons must be eliminated.

“THIS WILL BE A historic moment,” announced Ambassador Elayne Whyte Gómez on July 6, the day before 122 countries adopted the U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as a legally binding agreement to outlaw nuclear weapons—and a major step toward their complete elimination. (Sixty-nine nations refused to vote, including all the nuclear weapon states and all NATO members except the Netherlands.)

“I have been waiting for this day for seven decades, and I am overjoyed that it has finally arrived,” said Setsuko Thurlow, a renowned antinuclear activist and survivor of the U.S. nuclear weapon dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, in 1945.

Parties to the treaty are prohibited from developing, testing, producing, manufacturing, possessing, or stockpiling nuclear weapons. The treaty also creates, for the first time, obligations to support the victims of nuclear weapons use and testing, as well as remediation of environmental damage caused by nuclear weapons.

Equally as significant is the normative change the treaty brings. It declares the global norm that the use or threat to use

nuclear weapons, under any circumstances, is impermissible, and it delegitimizes their roles in international security. It also reinforces the global legal norm for nuclear weapons abolition, building on past efforts, including those of more than 100 countries that have formed nuclear-weapon-free zones. Furthermore, this new legal norm can be universalized to include current nuclear states that are willing to take significant steps toward disarmament.

Changes once thought impossible have happened throughout history because people acted to shift the norms, not because the dominant stakeholders lost interest. To skeptics—even “progressives” who disagree with nuclear weapons in principle but see no way forward without the participation of nuclear-armed states—I say that there is no need to give

those states the power to decide when such weapons will be prohibited or abolished.

The treaty’s preamble stresses “the role of public conscience in the furthering of the principles of humanity as evidenced by the call for the total elimination of nuclear weapons.” As conscious citizens, we must inform our families and communities about the treaty. We must encourage

**“I have been waiting
for this day for seven
decades.”**

From the Archives

November 1994

An Identity Crisis

THE MAJORITY of Generation X Latinos perceive that our faith sects (both Catholic and Protestant) have little to say about the issues that affect us most: technology-induced future shock, a national debt as frightening as a velociraptor, AIDS, and (perhaps most important) race and identity. What better way to explain the phenomenon of countless young Latinos leaving—in their own words, escaping—our religious institutions?



In San Antonio, it's reported that 3 percent of Catholic youth attend Mass every Sunday. Chicago Protestant pastors describe a local example of a national phenomenon: young people raised in Latino congregations leaving for Anglo-dominated superchurches or just dropping the faith altogether. In Los Angeles, Christian leaders report youth active in lowrider car and bicycle clubs, Quebradita and rap crews ... but not in church.

This is tragic, because my generation needs to hear a biblical message: that God considers all that we are—including our race, culture, gender, economic status—to be valuable. But since my generation does not access the resources of the Bible-believing church, we search for identity and racial validation elsewhere. ... Old racial divisions and terminology are dying. We need new words, new models, new dreams, to help us live in a new world. ... But will the church be able to communicate this to us? ■

Rodolfo Carrasco worked for the Hispanic Association of Bilingual Bicultural Ministries when this article appeared.

nuclear-weapon states, such as the U.S., to adopt a supportive stance toward the treaty, even if they don't sign it, because it complements the existing nonproliferation regime that they do support. Most important, we must have confidence that we can achieve a world free of nuclear weapons.

I grew up in Japan, but it wasn't until I arrived in the United States that I took a deeper interest in anti-nuclear work. In 2015, I joined youth activists from more than 20 countries at the International Youth Summit for Nuclear Abolition held in Hiroshima. Our pledge was to "refuse to stand by while nuclear weapons continue to threaten our lives and future generations."

Though nuclear weapons may not be in our daily consciousness, they affect us all. If one nuclear weapon is dropped—even by accident—it will cause catastrophic damage to lives, health, environment, food

production, and climate, not only in the present but also for future generations. The effects of the bombs dropped in 1945 are still greatly felt by the survivors and their families in Japan. Their resolve to never let anyone else go through that experience has fueled global activism.

Whyte Gómez identifies the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons as a "global public good." Around the world people of faith support this treaty as part of our common obligations to one another and our planet—because the status quo is not working. ■

Anna Ikeda is a program associate at Soka Gakkai International, a community-based Buddhist organization that promotes peace, culture, and education, and a member of Amplify, a global youth network for nuclear abolition (@amplifynetwork).

By Greg Williams

Matching Money with Morality

Interfaith investors seek a higher type of return.

RELIGIOUSLY MOTIVATED hate crimes are on the rise in the U.S. Anti-Muslim marches are held around the country. Synagogues receive bomb threats.

And yet interreligious collaboration is also on the rise. With the Jubilee Assembly, faith-motivated investors are pooling their tithes, *zakah*, and offerings for a higher purpose. The coalition takes its name from the ancient concept of "jubilee"—a regular season of mandated communal economic redistribution, justice, and equity in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Joshua Brockwell, a member of the Jubilee Assembly organizing team, works at Azzad Asset Management, a Muslim-led investment company. "By collaborating and putting our money where our morals are," wrote Brockwell, "the Jubilee Assembly provides an opportunity to live out our common values and make an impact in our communities."

Muslim investors operate under strict requirements: To be considered *halal* (permissible), investments cannot be in alcohol, weapons, or pork; neither can Muslim investors make any money through

interest (a difficult restriction in our modern economy). Institutions such as Azzad help Muslim investors stay on the right side of these calculations. "Charity is essential to the proper practice of Islamic investing," Brockwell said in a press release announcing that Azzad's U.S. Muslim investors had donated \$4.6 million to charity for Ramadan.

Jewish investors in the fund follow principles of *tzedakah*, or righteous giving. The Jewish philosopher Maimonides identified the highest level of *tzedakah* as supporting one in need with a gift, loan, or job. "Maimonides understood that a loan which helps individuals become economically self-sufficient is far more valuable than a one-time contribution," wrote Sandra Lawson, a rabbinical student and Jubilee Assembly committee member.

Christian institutions make up most of the investors. "We strongly feel a great commonality with each other—that being a special concern for the poor, the oppressed, the marginalized," said Baptist church member Andy Loving, founder of Just Money Advisors and a consultant to the Jubilee Assembly.

Using the Calvert Foundation's Community Investment Note—a financial instrument designed primarily to resource low-income communities—the Jubilee Assembly anticipates its investments will make money. Profit and sustainability remain motives of the fund, but it also operates out of spiritual and ethical tenets. Faith communities or pension funds might see higher returns in other types of investments, but would lose the social and spiritual capital gained through Jubilee.

In the last two years, Jubilee has made a \$500,000 loan to Chicago's Garfield Produce

Interreligious investors support renewable energy, provide jobs, and transform neighborhoods.

Company, a hydroponic vertical vegetable farm in a neighborhood with nearly 50 percent unemployment and little access to fresh produce, and a \$3 million loan to New Orleans-based PosiGen, a solar energy company bringing efficiency and renewable power to low-income households. Right now, Jubilee Assembly has more than \$275 million that it lends out and invests.

In addition to making direct gifts to individuals in need, interreligious investors are joining their social tithes to create greater impact to support renewable energy, provide jobs, and transform neighborhoods. With profit as only one of multiple bottom lines, new possibilities open up for social change.

All forms of investment—in the stock market or in people—involve risk. Loans fail, people betray, and money is lost. But for people of faith, the risk is underwritten by trust in God. Jews, Muslims, and Christians bring a variety of ethical views to the difficulties of ethical investing in a market organized for greed. Jubilee Assembly is one way churches, mosques, and temples are stronger together when they match money with morality. ■

Greg Williams (@gwilliamsster) is communications associate at an advocacy organization in Washington, D.C.

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NEWS

Heather Wilson (@aNomadPhotog)/Dust & Light photo



Marching Toward Beloved Community

In August, faith leaders marched through Charlottesville, Va., amid armed extremists, to resist white supremacy. Sojourners' David Potter joined the faith-led witness, but he pointed out that the church's response must ultimately include more than marching. "When the bodies of marginalized people are no longer in danger and the soul of the privileged is repaired, Beloved Community is possible," he wrote in "White Supremacy Versus the Gospel in Charlottesville." For ongoing coverage of Christians and faith leaders taking a stand against white supremacy, visit sojo.net/race.

QUOTED

“I created a world and I put my son in it and I asked you to love him, and then I wanted that love to change you.” —Ryan Green
on the virtual reality game he created
sojo.net/empathy

RACIAL JUSTICE



Singer and songwriter
Courtney Ariel

For Our White Friends

When two white friends asked how they could be better allies, Courtney Ariel appreciated the question. Yet as Ariel recognized in "For Our White Friends Desiring to Be Allies," some people of color are just plain tired of having to educate white people about racism. So Ariel compiled a list that she hopes "lighten[s] the load of marginalized folks." Some of her tips for would-be white allies include:

- **Listen more; talk less.** You have had the microphone for most of the time, for a very long time, and it will be good to give the microphone to someone else.
- **Use your influence.** Direct the folks that walk alongside you in real life (or follow you on the internet) toward the voice of someone who is living a marginalized/disenfranchised experience.
- **Don't be shocked.** Try not to "I can't believe that something like this would happen in this day and age!" your way into being an ally. Your shock and outrage echoes the fact that you have lived an entire life with the luxury of indifference about the lives of marginalized/disenfranchised folks.
- **Stop talking about colorblindness.** It's not a thing.
- **Don't expect people to educate you.** Do the work to educate yourself. Ask questions within relationships that feel safe, and do so respectfully.
- **Keep trying.** You're going to make mistakes; expect this. But keep showing up. Be compassionate. Lead with empathy, always.

Read more at sojo.net/allies.



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Hasan Minhaj of *Homecoming King* has the “audacity of equality.”

Feeling Like an American

TUNISIAN FRENCH scholar Nadia Marzouki published a book in France in 2013 with the title *L'Islam, une religion américaine?* In 2017, the book was updated with the events of the Trump campaign and additional analysis and republished in the United States as *Islam: An American Religion*.

Somehow along the way, as religious studies scholar Winnifred Fallers Sullivan notes, the question mark was dropped. The reasons are not entirely clear. Did something

She writes that “it’s out of the materials of *American* politics, law, and culture generally that Muslims are building the norms of their discourse and their public actions. In political and legal battles, their audience and interlocutor is the American public, not some hypothetical global *ummah*.”

Muslims are people with rights and dreams, like other Americans. Muslim leaders emphasize that they have an Abrahamic religion, Islam, similar to the Abrahamic religions of millions of other Americans, Judaism and Christianity. When they reference sharia, that big scary boo word, Muslim leaders have taken to talking about it as a code of ethics that can be easily adapted to the American context, as other global religions have adapted their ethics and laws to America.

In Hasan Minhaj’s Netflix comedy special *Homecoming King*, Minhaj tells the story of a racist attack that takes place at his home after 9/11. As they receive a threatening phone call from one group of bigots, they hear loud noises coming from outside. Another group has smashed in the windows of their car. Minhaj, knowing that the assailants can’t be far, runs up and down the street looking for them, blood streaming down his arm from his ill-fated

attempt to reach through the broken window and retrieve his bag from the back seat of the car. Minhaj returns to the driveway to see his father stoically sweeping up the glass. “These things happen, and these things will continue to happen,” his father says. “That’s the price we pay for being here.”

Minhaj calls this attitude the American Dream tax, which he describes as something that some immigrants and minorities simply accept. You are going to endure some racism which, if it doesn’t kill you, is simply the tax that gets paid for living in a white man’s country.

That is not how Minhaj sees it. Raised in the United States, he has what he calls “the audacity of equality.” He looks at the camera and says: “I’m in Honors Gov. I have it right here: Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. All men are created equal. ... I’m equal. I don’t deserve this.”

Somewhere in this land, there is a Muslim teenager watching that show, a kid who has maybe experienced harassment in school or at the mall, and she is nodding when Minhaj tells his story, and feeling like an American. ■



Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core, writes about social justice from his perspective as a Muslim American.

What does it mean for Islam to be an “American religion”?

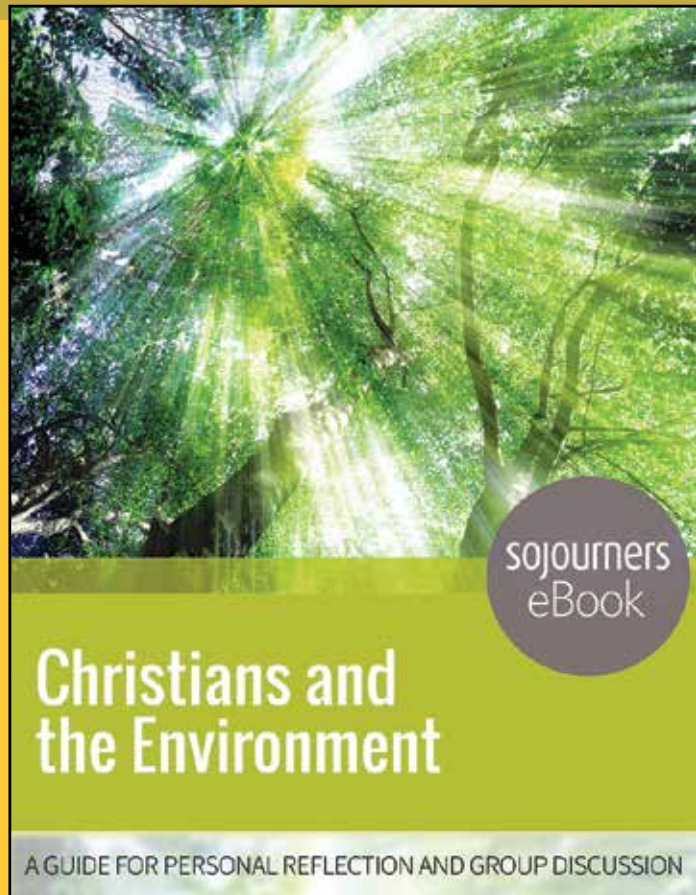
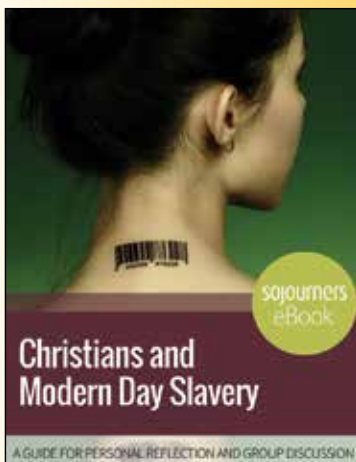
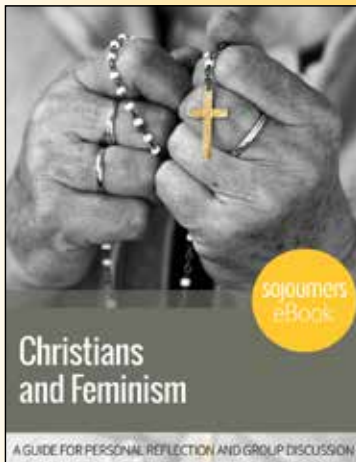
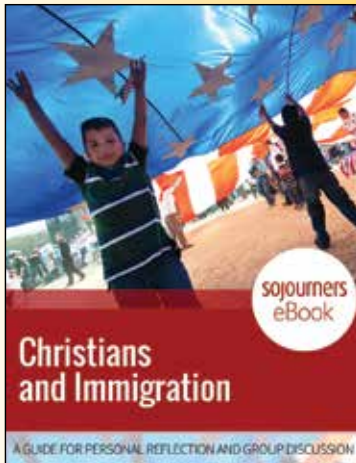
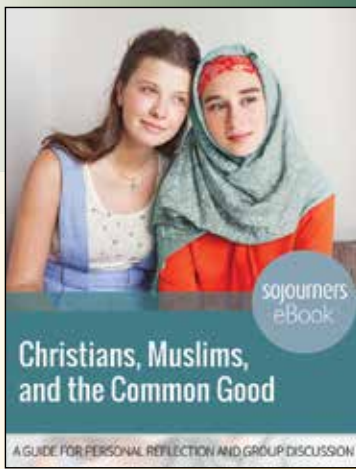
dramatic happen during those four years, not just to Muslims but, more important, *by* Muslims? Was it a marketing gimmick by the new publisher, Columbia University Press?

Either way, it raises a fascinating question: What does it mean to be an American religion, and can Islam in America be said to constitute one?

It may be useful to present Marzouki’s own case for her declaration. Islam has become an American religion, she claims, because Muslim leaders are taking care to present their community and tradition within the terms that broad numbers of Americans would understand and appreciate.

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from the editors of *Sojourners*



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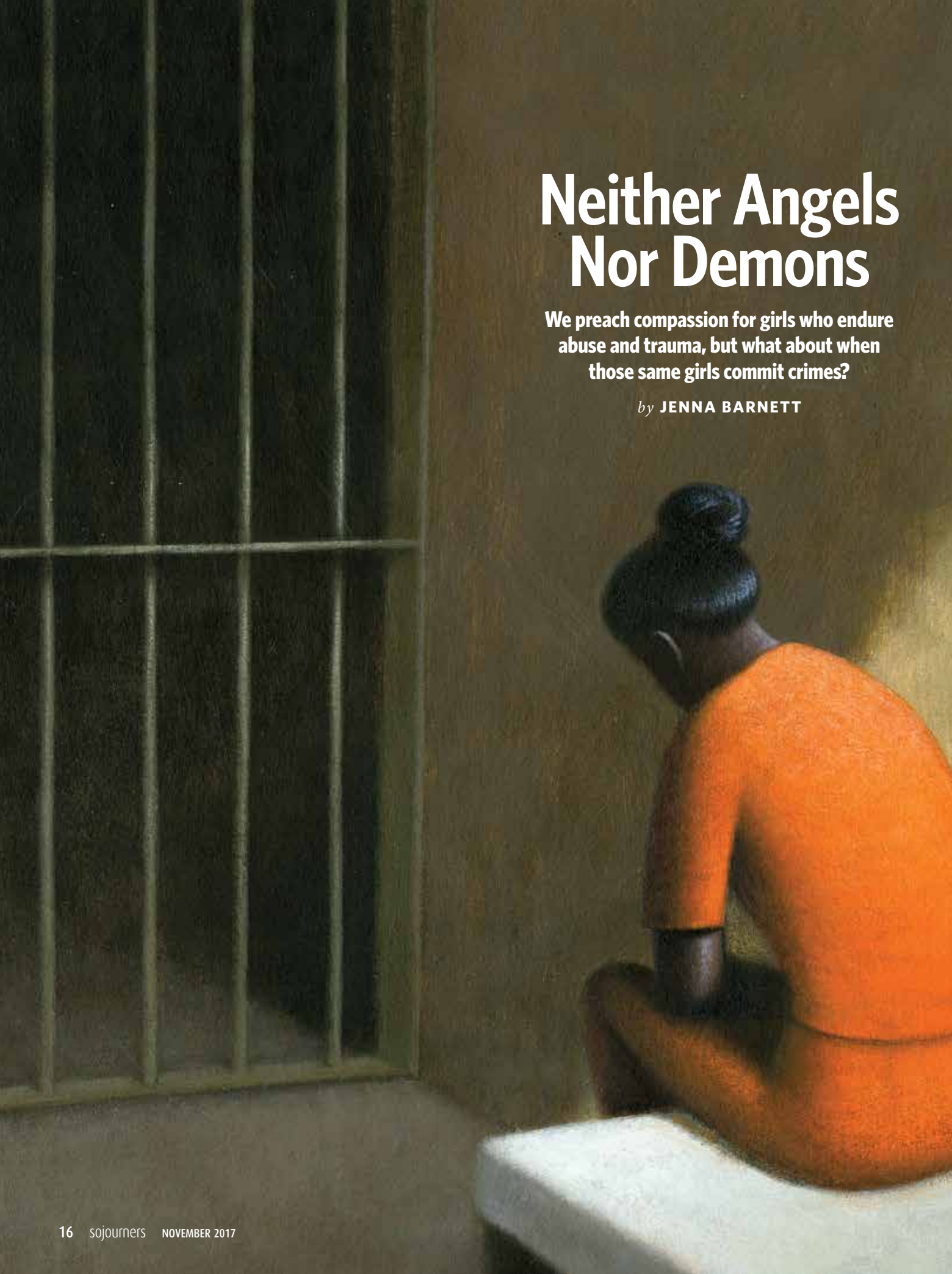
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A woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing an orange jumpsuit, is sitting on a white bench. She is looking out through a window with vertical metal bars. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, yellowish light coming from the right side, possibly a lamp or a window. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Neither Angels Nor Demons

**We preach compassion for girls who endure
abuse and trauma, but what about when
those same girls commit crimes?**

by JENNA BARNETT

CAN THINK OF MANY MISTAKES I made before turning 18, including a couple that could have landed me in juvenile detention: fireworks in the suburbs, running from the cops, lying to the cops about running from the cops, and one or two others I'll keep to myself because everyone I interviewed

for this story insists on this: Nobody is the worst thing they have ever done.

If those words are true, Sara Kruzan will not always be the 16-year-old who shot her sex trafficker in the head right after he took her to another hotel room.

And that means Kryz Shelley is not just the 17-year-old who used an unloaded gun to rob someone.

But back when Shelley stood trial as a teen, the judge only saw a criminal. Shelley still remembers what the judge said before delivering the 12-year sentence: "Good luck." He studied Shelley closely. "You'll do just fine in there."

Shelley believes that the judge felt like Shelley fit the bill of a juvenile delinquent—black, tall, and masculine. At the time, Shelley identified as a tomboy (today, Shelley is gender nonconforming). From an early age, Shelley could grow a full facial beard because of an inborn

hormone imbalance—a common symptom of polycystic ovarian syndrome.

But it's less about what the courts saw in Shelley, and more about what they didn't see: an honor-roll student with a steady job whose pastor came to the courtroom to offer support.

"We make them monsters, and nobody wants to help a monster."

Shelley was sentenced during the '90s, a time when crime among adults was going down, but crime among youth was spiking at never-before-seen rates. Americans were scared. "They were going around saying that we have a new species of child in America," said criminal justice reform advocate Bryan Stevenson. "And these kids may look

like kids, they may act like kids, they may sound like kids,' they said, 'but don't be deceived. These are not children ... These are super-predators.' And it didn't matter whether you were a Democrat or a Republican. Everybody wanted to be tough on the super-predators."

The concern over the rise in crime was legitimate,

Illustration by Jon Krause



“There is no such thing as a throw-away child.”

but the response—like so many “solutions” birthed in fear—was dangerously hasty. States all over the country implemented harsh mandatory minimums. California created the three strikes law, which gives a mandated term of at least 25 years to someone found guilty of committing a combination of a violent felony and two other convictions. Florida created the 10-20-Life law, commonly known by its unofficial slogan: “Use a gun, and you’re done.” In many states, juvenile offenders were not exempt from the severe sentences mandatory minimums prescribed. Today, there are more than 2,500 individuals who have been sentenced to life without the possibility of parole—for crimes they committed before age 18.

What the jury didn’t know

When Sara Kruzan was convicted of murder as a teenager, she became one of those individuals. But here’s what the judge never let her share in front of the jury: The man she shot, G.G. Howard, entered 11-year-old Kruzan’s life as a charming stranger riding a Mustang, offering her a double scoop of ice cream. He left her life with a bullet in the back of his head at a Dynasty Suites Motel. Somewhere in between those years, he raped her, groomed her for a life of prostitution, and became her pimp. Kruzan believes that her own mother was her first trafficker.

But there’s little room for context with mandatory minimums. Kruzan explained that the judge told her that Howard’s profession had nothing to do with her crime. He refused to let her attorney call expert witnesses to the stand who could speak to mental health concerns and child trafficking issues. Then he sentenced her to life in prison without possibility of parole.

Cases like Kruzan’s aren’t uncommon. In the past 10 years, advocates for criminal justice reform have identified a dark pattern: Almost every teenage girl in the juvenile detention system has endured family violence before entering the system.

A study of girls involved in Oregon’s juvenile justice system found that 93 percent had experienced sexual or physical abuse. Similarly, in a 2009 study of delinquent girls in South Carolina, 81 percent reported a history of sexual violence, and 42 percent reported dating violence. According to “The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline,” a report produced by the Human Rights Project for Girls, the Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, and the Ms. Foundation for Women, the “most common crimes for which girls are arrested—including running

away, substance abuse, and truancy—are also the most common symptoms of abuse.”

I asked Kruzan what she wished had happened during her trial.

“If someone would’ve looked at me and asked me questions: ‘Why do you have cuts on your wrists? Why do you self-mutilate your legs or your stomach? Why is it that you can’t look at yourself in the mirror?’ Or even just, ‘Sara, why can’t you make eye contact?’ The signs were so loud and obvious. But they went ignored.”

Compassion isn’t efficient

Kruzan was asking for more time and nuance from her courtroom than our justice system often allows. She was asking the courtroom to see her as a human—one who hurt, feared, lashed out, and had some growing up to do. But grace is a pesky, time-consuming task. The mythical super-predator—who possesses some unshakable evil from birth—is a simpler story to understand than that

Family photo



At left, a photo of young Sara Kruzan. She was 11 when she met the man who groomed her for prostitution. At age 17, Kruzan was convicted of his murder after the trial judge refused to allow expert testimony about mental health or child trafficking issues. At right, her final prison photo before her release on parole in 2013, after 19 years behind bars.

of a flawed human with a troubled past.

“We have demonized and dehumanized the population that has committed offenses,” Javier Stauring, executive director of the nonprofit organization Healing Dialogue and Action, told *Sojourners*. “We make them monsters, and nobody wants to help a monster. It’s interesting how we can feel compassion for the young girl who is being sexually abused, who is being trafficked, up until the point that she acts out that pain. Once she falls into the category of inmate or criminal, she is no longer worthy of any kind of compassion.”

In the U.S. criminal justice system, grace and forgiveness become collateral damage to fear and efficiency. But

while denying compassion is convenient, it isn't an option for Christians. James Dold of the Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth explained it this way: "There is no such thing as a throw-away child."

The Apostle Paul said it similarly: "I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love." Not even guns, not even violent acts of desperation, not even mandatory minimums.

Almost all the juvenile justice reform advocates I spoke with said the limitless grace of Christianity provides a needed critique to the senseless punitiveness of our criminal justice system. Over the past 20 years, social scientists have begun measuring the impact of Christian belief on a person's view of the criminal justice system. In a 2005 study, criminologists James D. Unnever, Francis T. Cullen, and Brandon K. Applegate found that Christian belief is a key predictor for both punitive *and* rehabilitative preferences for the criminal justice system—and which end of the spectrum you fall on often hinges on your image of God.

According to the researchers, Christians who view God as angry and judgmental often hold punitive attitudes regarding criminal punishment and the death penalty. In contrast, those who imagine a gracious and loving God—"that is, those who take seriously the admonition to 'turn the other cheek'—are less supportive of 'get tough' policies."

And for Christians who cling to the latter view, this is an opportunity: While courtrooms are designed for efficiency, sacred spaces are designed for telling—and listening to—difficult stories. What if churches invited formerly incarcerated young women to share their stories behind the pulpit, passed the offering plate for an adolescent's court fees, and preached about domestic and sexual violence—all the while preparing to walk alongside survivors?

Complex humans

For girls like Kruzan—survivors of violence who end up in juvenile detention—prison

Continued on Page 20

'Get "Them" Off the Streets'

Donald Trump, Jeff Sessions, and the future of juvenile justice

IN RECENT YEARS, the Department of Justice had begun to veer away from the harsh sentencing guidelines that were implemented in the 1980s and '90s, especially those used to lock up low-level, nonviolent drug offenders. But Trump-appointed Attorney General Jeff Sessions is on course to stop those changes.

In a new set of guidelines issued in May 2017, Sessions instructed prosecutors to pursue charges for the most serious offense possible, including charges that carried harsh sentences and mandatory minimums. Sessions described these guidelines as "moral and just" and praised them for producing "consistency."

But humans are not uniform and consistent, and neither are their crimes. U.S. District Court Judge John Coughenour believes mandatory minimums and sentencing guidelines make sentencing far too easy. "I considered sentencing to be an art and not a science," Coughenour told *The Atlantic* in 2016. "And it's not a science. It's a human being dealing with other human beings."

Not to mention: The long sentences doled out by mandatory minimums are neither effective nor cost-efficient. Instead, states such as Texas have shown that it's possible to reduce both crime and incarceration simultaneously, in part by investing more money into treatment and probation programs rather than new prisons.

Since 2012, the Supreme Court has deemed it unconstitutional to *mandate* that youth who commit certain kinds of crime be sentenced to life without parole, citing research on adolescent brain development to support its ruling. However, states and courts can still *choose* to sentence people to life without parole for crimes they committed as youth. Though 19 states and the District of Columbia have opted to outlaw life without parole for juveniles, this sentence is still legal in a majority of states, giving the U.S. the embarrassing distinction of being the only nation in the world to sentence offenders to life without parole for crimes they committed as juveniles.

And with Sessions at the helm of the Justice Department, it seems likely that life without parole will remain an option for those sentencing juvenile offenders. "We need to use every lawful tool we have to get the most violent offenders off our streets," Sessions told an international gathering of law enforcement officers earlier this year. "The more of them we take off the streets so they can no longer harm others, the safer our neighborhoods will be." —JB

The U.S. has the embarrassing distinction of being the only nation to sentence offenders to life without parole for crimes they committed as juveniles.



“We feel compassion for the young girl who is being sexually abused, up until the point that she acts out that pain—then she is no longer worthy of any kind of compassion.”

Continued from Page 19

can be retraumatizing. Detainees are subject to routine strip searches every time they go outside or visit with a guest from the “free world.” After Kruzan turned 17, she was transferred to the county jail, where she endured the same naked searches, but with dogs sniffing around for contraband. “I understand these correctional officers are worried about their safety,” she explained, “but what about the mental and emotional safety of these kids? What I would want to ask the officers is, ‘Would you eat the fruit these kids are going to bear from being cultivated in your soil?’”

Currently, both Republican and Democratic lawmakers are seeking creative ways to tend to this soil. With women composing the fastest growing segment of the prison population—a 700 percent increase since 1980—the problem has simply become too big to ignore. Sen. Cory Booker has introduced a new bill, co-sponsored by Sens. Kamala Harris, Elizabeth Warren, and Richard Durbin, titled the Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act. If passed, the act would ensure that all federal penal facilities are staffed by people with trauma-informed training. The bill would also ban the practice of shackling women while they give birth and would provide inmates with menstrual supplies free of charge. Essentially, the law would be a statement that society should no longer render invisible young women who have committed crimes, and that we should see these offenders as complex humans worthy of dignity—and tampons—freely given. In August, the Department of Justice issued a memo instructing wardens at federal prisons to provide menstrual hygiene products for female inmates at no cost. The memo represents a huge step forward for women’s health in prisons, which would be further codified by the Dignity for Incarcerated Women Act.

Kruzan’s story is an example of what can happen once society starts to care about women who have committed offenses. In 2013, Human Rights Watch and juvenile justice reform groups helped raise enough attention about Kruzan’s case to get her a parole hearing. After 19 years behind bars, Kruzan walked free. Today, Sara Kruzan works with Javier Stauring at Healing Dialogue and Action, providing emotional support for teens who are imprisoned—in the same facility where she was once locked away.

Hurt people, healed people

Back in 2016, Ian Friedman was about to turn down the case of Bresha Meadows, a 14-year-old girl who shot her father in the head after enduring a lifetime of his

abuse. But then he listened to what Bresha had to say.

“Mr. Ian, is my daddy dead?” she asked her prospective attorney. At the time, the news had only reported that Jonathan Meadows was taken to the hospital.

“Do you think it would be weird if I went to the funeral?” Meadows continued, after Friedman confirmed her father

had died. “I love my daddy, but I hate him for what he did to me and my mom.”

Bresha Meadows originally faced a lifetime in prison, because the prosecution considered trying her as an adult for aggravated murder. But then the tweets, the prayers, and the complicated context of her case poured into the courtroom. In May, she accepted a plea deal to serve two more months in prison (in addition to the 10 she had already served) before receiving six months of mandatory inpatient mental health treatment. The ruling could have been a lot worse, but it could have been better, too. Her family had to come up with \$70,000 to pay for that mental health treatment. But this is the real victory: After those six months, her record will be sealed and expunged, which may be the closest thing to a baptism the juvenile justice system has to offer.

In May, Meadows’ aunt, Martina Latessa, was asked how she felt about the proposed plea deal. She said she was optimistic for the first time in a while. “My main focus is Bresha’s well-being, Bresha’s life,” Latessa told *Sojourners*. “I want her to hold a productive life and be a contributing citizen and I want her—one day when she’s ready—to tell her story to other children.”

With the help of this mental health treatment, Latessa said she felt confident that Meadows could emerge from this mess as a forgiven and forgiving person with a powerful story to share. That certainly became true for Krys Shelley, who is now a carpenter and volunteer advocate for the California Coalition for Women Prisoners, and for Kruzan, who visits girls in juvenile detention with a message of “hope that’s tangible.”

But none of this healing or rehabilitation would have been possible were it not for advocate groups, pastors, and concerned citizens who stopped to listen to their stories with deep context—and demand that the courts do the same.

“Hurt people hurt people,” Stauring said before connecting me to Kruzan via phone. “But healed people heal people. They become the best teachers our communities have ever seen.” ■

Jenna Barnett is women and girls campaign associate for Sojourners.



Getting Beyond 'Faux Hope'

SOME PEOPLE SEEM to relish being described as “prophetic voices.” I’ve never enjoyed being called that. Old Testament prophets seem rather lonely and cranky, and, despite some of the things I write, I am not cranky after I have my coffee.

I wanted to write this column with more levity, more joy, and more hope. My first upbeat draft didn’t feel quite right, a bit forced, but I submitted it—trying to honor the deadline and ignoring my gut that was telling me the words didn’t match my heart.

Hours later, white supremacists marched at the University of

in the pews of what has been our home church for the past decade. We did not go to church as “prophets,” though I suppose my “Black Lives Matter” shirt carried a distinct message. It was a proclamation and an invitation. It was a way to tell our sisters and brothers in church that recent events of racial violence were making us cry out in pain, anger, confusion, and sadness and that we wanted desperately to join and be joined by others.

I tried to find the hope when the pastor spoke about evil and racial violence—but I was left exhausted when the preaching stopped short of clearly naming Charlottesville, white supremacy, and racism. I was expecting, at the very least, a preacher ready to clearly identify evil and love, and instead we heard fear—fear to name the sin of slavery, the sin of racism, the sin of white supremacy, the sin of staying silent.

I didn’t expect the congregation to march into the streets, but what a hopeful surprise that would’ve been. No. My hopes are tempered and, perhaps, the bar lowered. I certainly expected marching orders: Go read this book, go meet new people, go talk with people with whom you

don’t share political or even religious viewpoints.

My spouse and I left feeling lonely and empty, which I realized is the place from which I wrote that faux-hopeful first draft of a column.

Today I realized I had set the bar so low that the words I expect from others and the words that came out of myself were unbecoming of a Christian. Expecting the bare minimum not only of myself but also of the church is an insult. I don’t think “fake it until you make it” is the message of the church, but that’s what I tried to do. That is what we are asking the church to do when we set the bar so low that it is no different from any political, governmental, or business system.

We are not all prophets with a capital “P,” but the church is supposed to be prophetic. As Christians, we are supposed to speak and live into that. Let’s stop faking it. Let’s own the sin, the anger, the sadness, the loneliness, and the despair as well as the hope, the joy, and the peace. That feels much more honest. ■

Kathy Khang, co-author of More than Serving Tea, is a writer, speaker, and coffee-drinker in the north suburbs of Chicago.



We are not all prophets, but the church is supposed to be prophetic.

Virginia carrying Tiki torches and shouting Nazi slogans.

Joy has not been erased, but it certainly takes discipline to see and enjoy it deeply. What is closer to the surface is a loneliness that echoes what I have read in the experiences of prophets.

After Charlottesville, my spouse and I made an effort to connect, to comfort and be comforted in the presence of other Christ-followers, to worship, lament, praise, and take communion with other Christians





First Nations members dance during an "Idle No More" demonstration on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada.

Chris Watte/Reuters

'My Loss is Your Loss'

A resurgence of Indigenous identity and activism invites repentance and response from the descendants of European settlers.

by ELAINE ENNS

STONEY KNOLL RISES gently above the Canadian prairies, providing impressive views of the agriculturally rich valley between North and South Saskatchewan Rivers. A sacred site for the Young Chippewayans, who call it *Opwashemoe Chakatinaw*, the knoll lies near the center of a 30-square-mile tract selected by their chief in 1876 as part of Treaty Six, a pact between the government and the Indigenous people of central Saskatchewan and Alberta.

And it stands at the heart of a continuing struggle over history, identity, and justice in Saskatchewan. My home place.

In the late 19th century, Young Chippewayans—the third-largest Cree tribe to sign Treaty Six—were struggling to survive increasing encroachment by European settlers, spurred by then-Prime Minister John A. Macdonald's aggressive campaign to "open up" the region. The disappearance of the buffalo and devastating epidemics forced the tribe to leave their reserve land in search of food.

In October 1898, the federal government, without consultation or compensation, assigned Young Chippewayan land to be part of a larger area reserved for Mennonite settlers coming from the United States, West Prussia, and Manitoba. My community.

On Aug. 23, 1976, a gathering was held at Fort Carlton, Saskatchewan, to commemorate the signing of Treaty Six. But according to the Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations, the anniversary "represented 100 years of broken promises." Chief Rod Okemow refused to accept a commemorative treaty medal. And several dozen Young Chippewayans—landless and federally unrecognized since 1889—decided to visit "their land" and talk to a few Mennonite farmers about their situation. For the latter, it was decidedly unsettling.

In response, the Conference of Mennonites in Canada hired Leonard Doell to research the Young Chippewayan claims. Doell has been working tirelessly ever since, learning the stories the land holds, educating Mennonites, and working alongside Young Chippewayans for justice. Also my responsibility.



Every place in North America has an

A resurgence of identity and activism

Indigenous Peoples' Day, in 2017 observed on Oct. 9, began as a protest of Columbus Day mythology and fanfare. This year marks the 25th anniversary of the 1992 Columbus Quincentenary, during which Indigenous peoples all over the world mobilized to contest the dismembered narratives of European inhabitation of the Americas. Those movements represented a turning point, both for Indigenous self-determination *and* for settler consciousness. (I use the term "settler" both for the original European settlers in North America and for their descendants today.) In their wake, several key campaigns have broadened and deepened efforts to decolonize land and history on Turtle Island (an Indigenous term for North America).

For example, 10 years ago, after decades of advocacy, the U.N. General Assembly overwhelmingly adopted the landmark Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). Only four countries opposed, each with significant histories of unresolved Native claims: Canada, the U.S., New Zealand, and Australia. As international law, UNDRIP affirms Indigenous peoples' right of self-determination; prohibits discrimination and genocide; calls on states to honor and respect treaties; protects Indigenous languages and cultures; and upholds Indigenous rights to lands, territories, and resources.

Though both Canada and the U.S. recently removed their objector status to UNDRIP, violations of its letter and spirit have led to a new era of Indigenous nonviolent direct action around North America. The grassroots movement Idle No More was founded in Saskatchewan in 2012 by four women in response to Canada's weakening of environmental laws. Through "round dance" flash mobs and blockades, Idle No More continues to inspire political actions worldwide for Indigenous sovereignty and rights and oppose environmental degradation, including at the Standing Rock Reservation in the Dakotas.

The astonishing courage and persistence

of "water protectors" opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline at Standing Rock captured international attention for much of last year. While Sioux tribal leadership had been opposing the pipeline for years, in April 2016 the first of four encampments was established on the pipeline's route. Over the following nine months, some 8,000 people came to help occupy the contested site, including religious leaders, veterans, and, most important, representatives of more than 280 Native nations from around the world. The prayers of Indigenous elders grounded dramatic nonviolent confrontations with pipeline security, changing the face of ecojustice activism.

"The reality is that extractive industries have been part of the experience of every single tribe in the U.S.," said Kyle Powys Whyte, a Michigan State University professor and member of the Potawatomi Nation, last November. "In a lot of ways, the activism, the acts of protection we engage in today are no different from what our ancestors were doing 200 years ago when they were facing the barrage of U.S. colonialism. ... We always re-situate what we're doing and the heritage of our ancestors."

How are "settlers" responding?

Every place in North America has an Indigenous history prior to European colonization. But we settlers are only now beginning to engage this history and its implications. So how are we responding to the resurgence of Indigenous identity and activism, particularly faith-rooted activists, congregations, and denominational bodies? Here are some conscientious examples:

■ Several denominations have passed (or are in deliberation about) statements *repudiating the Doctrine of Discovery* (the medieval legal, philosophical, and theological framework that rationalized theft of land and dehumanization of Indigenous Peoples around the globe). The Ted & Company theater company has begun touring a play titled "Discovery: A Comic Lament," which seeks to educate and challenge settler churches

about the doctrine. Numerous evangelical universities have invited Navajo educator Mark Charles to talk about the doctrine's bitter legacy, and he does not hold back.

■ The Kairos ecumenical initiative in Canada has for years employed the "*blanket exercise*" to dramatize for congregations the history of conquest and ongoing issues of sovereignty, land, and justice; this embodied mapping experience is now widely used in the U.S. as well.

■ Churches are supporting efforts of *historical truth-telling*. For example, congregations have collaborated with the Return to the Earth project, founded by Cheyenne Peace Chief Lawrence Hart, to repatriate Native remains from settler institutions. Churches in the Twin Cities have supported Mohican educator/activist Jim Bear Jacobs in his Healing Minnesota Stories campaign to revise "heroic" settler accounts from the perspective of Indigenous victims. And some 500 clergy from many denominations and faiths gathered at Standing Rock to acknowledge wrongs done and make a formal apology to Indigenous leaders there.

■ Last year on Indigenous Peoples' Day, we organized a Bartimaeus Institute in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, titled "The TRC Calls Churches to Action: Building Capacity for *Restorative Solidarity*." Indigenous and settler leaders from across Canada wrestled together on how to respond to the historic Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, nine of which were specifically directed toward churches. From that gathering a "Pilgrimage for Indigenous Rights" was organized in which mostly Christian participants walked almost 400 miles from Kitchener to Ottawa, Ontario, in support of the Canadian adoption and implementation of UNDRIP.

■ And individual leaders are *apprenticing themselves to Indigenous wisdom*. For example, evangelical Joshua Grace, pastor of Circle of Hope in Philadelphia, graduated from the North American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies, which is helping change the theological conversation. And French Canadian Catholic activist/artist Denise Nadeau has worked closely with the Water Walkers movement led by Anishinaabe grandmothers.

Indigenous history prior to European colonization.

These are just some of the ways that settlers are taking what I call historical “response-ability” for the continuing legacy of Indigenous dispossession.

Backpacks full of gasoline

But there are also deeper issues of identity and consciousness that we settlers must work with, theologically and psychologically. I am investigating ways in which dominant settler narratives suppress and distort our family immigrant histories, so that we can get at how our ancestors, directly or indirectly, may have been involved in injustice. I am also probing how intergenerational trauma influences not only Indigenous communities but settler descendants as well, beginning with my own people.

Our workshops encourage settlers to “do our own work,” as Audre Lorde famously put it, by delving into the particularities of our family or community narrative. We use the metaphor of the backpack that we carry (borrowed from Peggy McIntosh’s anti-racism work), which is full of privilege, distortions, self-justifying myths, and unexamined trauma. In Iowa, a participant objected that this kind of deep identity work wasn’t addressing the urgency of “all the burning buildings” of this historical moment. “If we *don’t* do this work,” another participant responded, “we will be running into burning buildings with backpacks full of gasoline and make the fire worse!” This is a powerful caution to settler activists who presume we can help, or that our good intentions can solve thorny historical problems. We must work to see how we carry the contradictions as we seek to understand what “restorative solidarity” might demand of us.

Which brings me back to Stoney Knoll. This work is deeply personal; my oldest sister lives just a few miles from that site, on a farm her husband inherited from the first Mennonite settlers, adjacent to the reserve of the Beards and Okemasis’ Cree Nation. “This land is a refuge for me,” she told me a few years ago. “But for a quarter century we always went *west*, to the settler towns of Laird and Tiefengrund—never *east* toward Beards. However, for the last decade I have been teaching mostly Indigenous kids at a public school near the reserve, which has opened up a whole new side of my connection

to this land—and to our closest neighbors.”

Currently, half of Stoney Knoll is owned by a Mennonite family, the other half by a Lutheran church. In August 2006, a gathering marking the 130th anniversary of the signing of Treaty Six took place at Stoney Knoll. It was organized by Young Chippeways, the Office of the Treaty Commissioner, representatives from Mennonite and Lutheran churches in the area, and Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Saskatchewan. Some 130 people participated in a sacred pipe ceremony and the signing of a covenant of cooperation.

Conversations continue between MCC leaders, local landowners, and tribal members about how to correct the historical disenfranchisement of the Young Chippeways. Efforts include the Spruce River Folk Festival, an annual cultural event focusing on landless bands within Saskatchewan, with proceeds going to Young Chippeways. MCC has established a Stoney Knoll program fund that supports the ongoing land claim and reconciliation efforts between Mennonites, Lutherans, and Young Chippeways; more than \$60,000 dollars has been raised to date. But we have a long way to go to heal the legacy of colonization and its continuing injustices.

Making our histories one story

This summer I had lunch with Harry Lafond, executive director of the Office of the Treaty Commissioner in Saskatchewan, who played such an important role in both my research and our institute last year. We discussed ongoing efforts of regional churches to respond to the TRC’s calls to action.

“My loss is your loss,” Lafond told me. “It’s much more powerful if we can merge our histories and make them one story.” Indigenous leaders such as Lafond understand that our healing as settlers depends on our willingness and ability to revise our narratives, re-member the stories of the land and its First Peoples, and help right wrongs.

The TRC has brought painful historical



Chief Ben Weenie of the Young Chippewyan First Nation, center, signs a covenant with Mennonite representative Abram J. Funk, left, and Lutheran Robert Schultz.

truths to the forefront of Canadian awareness. But most U.S. settlers remain ignorant of our parallel history of colonization, including the horrific legacy of Indian boarding schools, in which churches were deeply complicit. We have work to do, which must be directed inward as well as outward, engaging the past as well as the future.

But there is good news for those who labor to heal historic violations and their legacies, expressed by the 8th-century prophet Jeremiah: “In those days people will no longer say, ‘The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children’s teeth are set on edge’” (Jeremiah 31:29). The prophet was citing a proverb of ancient Israel, lamenting what we today call “intergenerational trauma.” He recognized that people bear the scars of historical wrongs, both those done *to* and *by* their ancestors. But he also envisioned a day when our communities would be liberated from these shadows. My hope. ■

*Elaine Enns is co-director of Bartimaeus Cooperative Ministries in Oak View, Calif., and author of *Ambassadors of Reconciliation* (Orbis, 2009). Her current work focuses on historical responsibility and intergenerational trauma among North American settler descendants and their relationship with Indigenous neighbors.*

Safe House

As the Trump administration continues its attacks against immigrants, churches offer sanctuary, and more, to people under threat.

by **DHANYA ADDANKI**

WHEN I FIRST SPOKE with Rosa Sabido, she had been in sanctuary at Mancos United Methodist Church in Colorado for 75 days. She sleeps in a makeshift room in what used to be the church's nursery, the head of her bed resting against a small mural of Noah's Ark. Members of the church donated a bed, a dresser, and a computer with internet access and also installed a shower in the room itself.

Most days she has visitors, including members of the church and her parents, who take turns sleeping in a nearby office during the night and keep Sabido company during the day. She bakes when she feels inspired and sometimes joins church members in practicing yoga. But Sabido is clear: Sanctuary isn't glamorous.

"The hardest thing is having to depend on someone," said Sabido. "I have always been self-sufficient, always working to fulfill my needs and my parents' needs."

Sabido was raised in Mexico City but fled to the U.S. in 1987 due to the city's increasing violence; she was 23. For the past 30 years, Sabido has lived in Cortez, Colo., a small town where her mother is a legal resident and her stepfather is a naturalized citizen. Sabido worked as a secretary at a nearby church and prepared taxes at H&R Block, using her salary to support her parents.



The number
of sanctuary
congregations
has doubled
since Trump's
inauguration.

Rosa Sabido looks out
a window of Mancos
United Methodist Church
in Colorado, where she
has been in sanctuary
to avoid deportation.

Photo by Lucy Nicholson/Reuters

“If a law is not grounded in love, grace, and human dignity, then we need to challenge that law.”

But since Sabido didn't have documents that would allow her to stay in the U.S. permanently, she used visitor visas to travel between Mexico and the U.S. In 1998, she was stopped at the airport and deported back to Mexico City. She returned to the U.S. and in 2008 was arrested by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). But instead of being immediately re-deported, Sabido was released and asked to check in with ICE regularly, which she did. Each year she paid \$155 and applied in person for a stay of removal, a direct order from the Department of Homeland Security that restricts ICE from deporting an undocumented immigrant. And up until earlier this year, her stays were approved.

This wasn't unusual: Under the Obama administration, more than 3 million undocumented immigrants were forcibly removed—more than under any other president in U.S. history; the administration claimed that those prioritized for deportation were mainly undocumented immigrants who had been convicted of felonies. But under the Trump administration, things changed: All undocumented immigrants, including Sabido, are now considered targets for detention and deportation. In fact, from Jan. 22 to April 29, 2017, there were 10,800 arrests of undocumented immigrants *without* criminal records, compared to 4,200 such arrests during the same period in 2016—an increase of more than 150 percent.

And earlier this year, Sabido got bad news: ICE had denied her request for a one-year stay of removal. This meant Sabido was eligible for immediate deportation to Mexico. Her options were limited: face deportation, go into hiding, or seek sanctuary. She chose the latter.

An adaptable movement

When most people picture the sanctuary movement, they probably envision someone like Rosa Sabido: an undocumented immigrant taking refuge in a church to avoid deportation. And historically, this has been true: In the 1980s, political refugees fled violence in Central America and took sanctuary in U.S. churches to avoid deportation back to their countries of origin—a sentence that would have meant near-certain death for many of the refugees. The goal of the movement was to save lives: Many of the refugees remained in U.S. churches until they were secretly transported to Canada via an underground-railroad-like network of churches or until the U.S. granted them political asylum.

Two decades later, the movement was revived after

Congress failed to pass comprehensive immigration reform during the Bush administration. The new initiative, known as the New Sanctuary Movement, aimed “to offer sanctuary to a few representative

families who would become the face of the immigrant reality,” explained movement co-founder Alexia Salvatierra in a 2007 issue of *Sojourners*. Most of those who took sanctu-



Rosa Sabido at Mancos UMC.

ary in U.S. churches during this era weren't recent refugees, but were undocumented immigrants who had lived in this country for years—and whose communities and families would be torn apart were they to be deported.

In 2014, as the number of deportations under the Obama administration began to rise, the movement surged again, this time to hold the administration accountable to its stated policy of targeting convicted felons for removal. When undocumented immigrants without a criminal record received deportation orders, churches opened their doors to provide sanctuary while lawyers appealed the immigrants' cases through the legal system—as Southside Presbyterian of Tucson, Ariz., one of the original sanctuary congregations of the '80s, did for Daniel Neyoy Ruiz in 2014. In other words: The sanctuary movement appeared—and adapted—when the community needed it.

Today, immigrants taking physical sanctuary in a place of worship remains a key part of the movement. For Craig Paschal, pastor of Mancos United Methodist Church, it wasn't hard to decide what to do when Rosa Sabido approached him and asked if she could live in his church's building to avoid deportation. Mancos is a small town with just over 1,300 residents; Paschal often ran into Sabido at the supermarket, and he sometimes bought the tamales that Sabido sold near the store. “The beauty of living in such a small town is the intimacy in the community,” said Paschal. “We were always just living life together. We were friends

Jerry McBride/Durango Herald



Jeanette Vizguerra, left, was granted a two-year stay of removal after spending 86 days inside a Denver church. Roxana Orellana Santos was released by ICE after the faith community turned out in force at her check-in.

El Tiempo Latino

Jake Holschuh and community members first, and that was that.” Sabido entered sanctuary in Mancos United Methodist earlier this summer.

Paschal disagrees with those who claim sanctuary is unlawful. “One time the law of the land was slavery. I think it’s a cop-out to say ‘The law is the law,’” he said. “If the law is not grounded in love, grace, and human dignity, then we need to question and challenge that law, and that’s what we’re doing.”

A ministry of presence

Paschal’s commitment reverberates throughout all sanctuary congregations—a faith-rooted resolve to protect and stand in solidarity with undocumented immigrants that reaches back to the scriptural commandment “Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner.” Yet the needs of undocumented immigrants in the U.S. today stretch beyond seeking safety in church buildings, and the understanding of what it means for a church to offer sanctuary has expanded accordingly.

According to Rev. Noel Andersen, grassroots coordinator for immigrants’ rights at Church World Service, the number of sanctuary congregations has doubled since Trump’s inauguration. Yet not all congregations—either for reasons of space, safety, or legal risk—physically host someone in their building as Paschal’s congregation has done. Of the roughly 800 U.S. sanctuary congregations, including churches, synagogues, and mosques, only about a dozen are currently home to someone in need of physical sanctuary.

For sanctuary congregations that are unable to host someone, there are other ways to offer support. As seen in the cases of immigrants such as Roxana Orellana Santos, these alternate methods of participating in sanctuary offer real protection.

In August, Santos, an immigrant from El Salvador, was scheduled for a routine check-in with ICE in Baltimore. Typically, check-ins are for undocumented immigrants who ICE doesn’t consider an immediate priority for deportation. During these appointments, ICE officials make sure immigrants are working and provide proof of their current address; however, in some cases since Trump’s election, immigrants who report for a check-in have been immediately detained and deported.

member of the community. They also asked for “accompaniment,” a sanctuary strategy where several people join an immigrant and remain present throughout the entire check-in appointment. The accompaniers—who immigrants sometimes request be clergy members—provide emotional support, put pressure on ICE officials to avoid drastic actions, and contact family members if something goes wrong.

On the day of her check-in, Santos was accompanied by Rev. Julia Jarvis and Rev. Alex Vishio. Both pastors wore clergy collars, a visual cue to ICE officials that Santos had the support of the faith community. They walked into the ICE office with Santos, prepared for any outcome. It was an emotional moment. “I could hear her little girls crying, and it was piercing thinking that they might not ever see her again,” said Jarvis.

After a security check, Santos and her accompaniers waited two hours before they walked into the stuffy room where the check-in would take place. As they waited, Jarvis spoke with Santos through an interpreter, helping her meditate and calm her body with breathing exercises. They

looked at videos of Santos’ twin girls from her phone, laughing at funny memories. Yet Jarvis was careful not to offer false hope; she avoided saying “Everything is going to be okay.” She said, “We’re just present with whatever is happening.”

In the end, Santos came out of the office with a stay of removal, greeted with cheers from her supporters at the rally outside. “It’s a clear mandate to be in solidarity with those who are marginalized,” said Jarvis.

“The people within sanctuary have to lead the movement.”

“They are capable”

Beginning last February, community organizer Jeanette Vizguerra spent more than 86 days in sanctuary at a Denver church. On May 3, 2017, she was granted a two-year stay of removal and left the church.

Through an interpreter, Vizguerra told *Sojourners* of her struggles in sanctuary. Though she missed her family and worried incessantly about her future in the U.S., she continued to speak out and organize on behalf of undocumented immigrants. While she was in sanctuary, Vizguerra gave presentations to visiting groups of university students, talking to them about the U.S. immigration system. When other

undocumented immigrants came into the church, Vizguerra would document their cases and follow up with them. Her work led her to be named one of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential people in 2017.

But Vizguerra's experience also gave her a front-row seat to the challenges currently facing the sanctuary movement. Though she said the level of solidarity she received was astounding—complete strangers visited her, sent her supportive messages, and reminded her there was a community supporting her—she became frustrated when those in sanctuary were repeatedly depicted as helpless, voiceless victims. This bothered her because she knew that people who seek sanctuary were like her: people who worked jobs, took care of families, and lived independent lives in the U.S. And she knew that being in sanctuary tears that reality to shreds.

Vizguerra also saw well-intentioned and passionate people join the movement and make their voices louder than those it most directly affected. As a result, she felt her voice was often left out of the conversation, especially when it came to matters involving the money that had been raised on Vizguerra's behalf through a fundraising website.

"Sometimes white allies have a culture that is very paternalistic; they have to learn how to listen to us," said Vizguerra.

Alexia Salvatierra of the New Sanctuary Movement agrees. As a seminary student in the '80s, Salvatierra attended a sanctuary church and saw U.S. citizens willingly risk jail time to shelter those the government sought to deport. But according to Salvatierra, the risks for people in sanctuary—today, as in the '80s—is always far greater than what their allies face.

Those who are deported today risk being physically—and permanently—separated from their families. In many cases, those who are deported become targets of violence. Even while they remain in the U.S., the mental health of undocumented immigrants suffers from the anxiety of not knowing how much longer they have left in this country they've called home.

"The story is usually told that the citizens were heroes, but it was really a partnership and a mutual sacrifice," said Salvatierra.

Vizguerra's advice to congregations looking to become a place of sanctuary to undocumented immigrants is simple: "The people within sanctuary have to lead the movement," she said. "They are capable." ■

Dhanya Addanki is associate web editor at Sojourners.

Poetry

BY RHETT WATTS



Needed Inventions

(from the book *2,100 Needed Inventions*, by R. F. Yates, 1949)

A way of binding books that will prevent breaking of backs.

Legs that automatically level billiard tables.
A method for eliminating saliva from wind instruments.

Key that will never lose its identity. Holder for pocket use that will bring forth the right key without searching.

An unbreakable light bulb. A wallpapering machine that will be successful in the hands of an amateur.

Slot machine that will deliver ice cream cones.
A garbage truck without any odor.

Birdcage that will prevent accidents to birds,
many are presently killed by hanging.

An umbrella that can be guaranteed against turning inside out. A road that will not be slippery when wet.

An unbreakable violin string, bathtub that will not overflow, noiseless lawnmower.

Daddy doll that will be as popular as a mommy doll.
A means for the prevention of barnacles.

Shotgun that will not kick.
A means for the prevention of shotguns.

*Rhett Watts is the author of *Willing Suspension*. She lives in Auburn, Mass.*

Devil and the Deep Blue Sea

THE COASTAL FOG lifts to the height of soft bluffs and a man appears on the beach. The tide is low. I watch him hold a specially crafted staff in his right hand that he uses to poke, prod, and drag lines in the sand. He totters along like a modern Rumi, hand scribing an elegant poem on the strand. Perhaps in sand script it says: “Small birds destroyed an army, so you’d know they gained their strength from God.”

For the past six years, Denny Dyke has kept his morning ritual, creating intimately carved, hundred-foot-wide sand labyrinths—sacred circles, holy walkways, salt-soaked mandalas—on the Oregon coast. He draws for an hour, outlining 4,000-year-old designs and adding his own, creating ephemeral art.

I met Denny near Bandon, Ore., at a time I was desperate for spiritual rest. It has been an exhausting year. A year since the demon of white supremacy recaptured the White House. A year of rapacious capitalist thugs masquerading as



Pamela Hansen

be able to see the end from where you start. A one-way path leads from entrance to goal. Without struggle, in stately movement with stranger-companions, one walks prayerfully along the way, spiraling around the previous night’s flotsam of kelp or beer cans and around thousand-year-old sea stacks. Encountering the moveable and the immovable, the minor problem and the major circumstance.

Labyrinths, when entered as a spiritual exercise, quiet the mind so one can listen.

I’VE FOUND IT hard to listen to God this year. It’s hard to hear with the devil tweeting in your ear. This devil is known by its fruits—it incarcerates, detains, deports, and buries our children and neighbors at an accelerated rate. It “prowls around looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8). The greedy muzzle opens: Hear it roar.

Step by step in the sand, I let God reign over my mental mobocracy. Slow, slow. Breathe. Breathe. It was breath that brought creation out of chaos.

Chrysostom preached on the “affair of the statues”—a

tax revolt against Roman Emperor Theodosius led by the conquered Antiochenes in which they pulled down statues dedicated to the imperial family, thus desecrating deities. They lived in terror of fire and fury soon to be unleashed by the emperor. Chrysostom reminded the Jesus-followers that power was not found in statues or great architecture from the past, not even in the imperial shock troops. True power was built on the virtues practiced by the people every day: prudence, justice, courage, temperance.

“Let the sea rage,” preached Chrysostom, “it cannot break the rock. Let the waves rise, they cannot sink the boat of Jesus.”

After the thick fog-veils are pulled back and the sun is fully in its temple, the labyrinth, pilgrims, and Denny vanish. Soon enough high tide returns, teething the labyrinth edge, swallowing chunks of Denny’s perfect circumferences. All return to

the given day. And a flock of small birds rises over the Pacific. ■

Rose Marie Berger, a Sojourners senior associate editor, is a Catholic peace activist and poet.

It’s hard to hear with the devil tweeting in your ear.

legislators, callous political buffoonery inciting legislative chaos, greasy fingers tweeting too near the nuclear button, acts of hate rising like sea levels.

Lately, I’ve been clinging to a phrase written by John Chrysostom during the uprisings in Antioch in the 4th century: “The waters have risen and severe storms are upon us, but we do not fear drowning for we stand firmly upon a rock.”

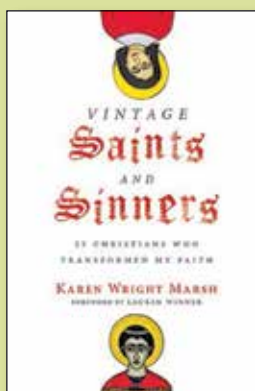
I brought my inner chaos to Denny’s sand labyrinth. A labyrinth is not a maze. There are no blind alleys or cul-de-sacs. It is the opposite of chaotic. Labyrinths are orderly, even though you may not



"It is what you read when you don't have to that determines what you will be when you can't help it."

—OSCAR WILDE, Irish author and playwright

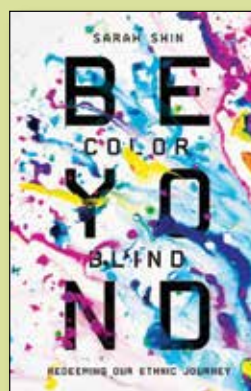
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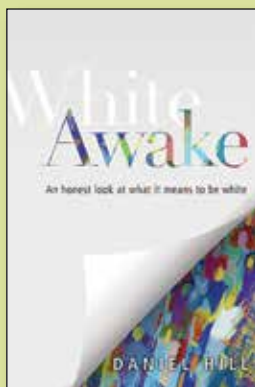
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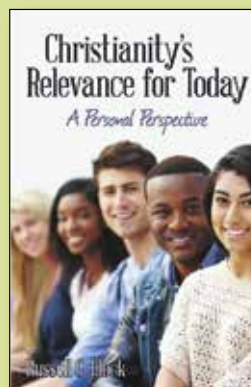
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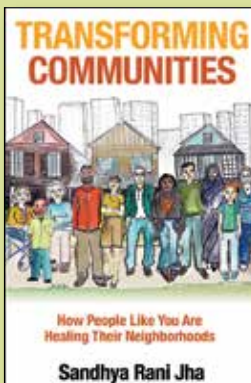
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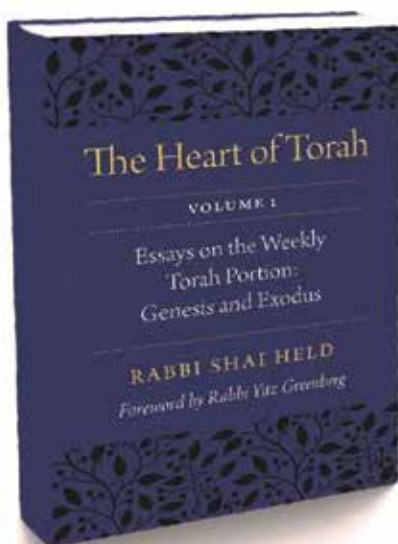


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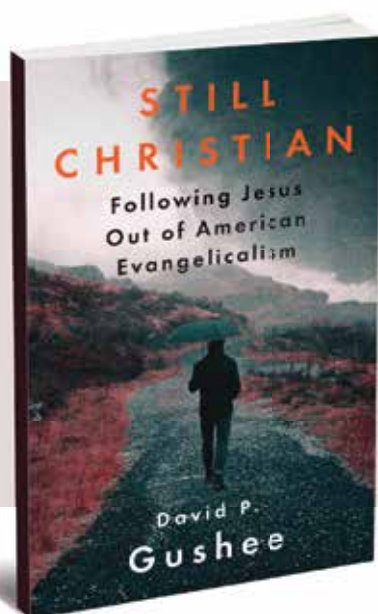
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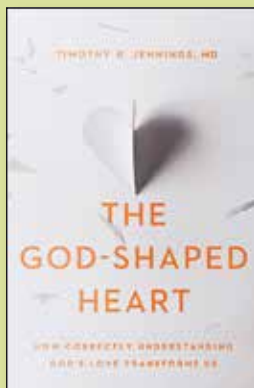
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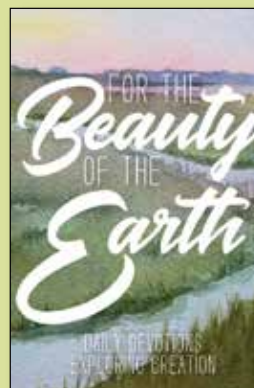
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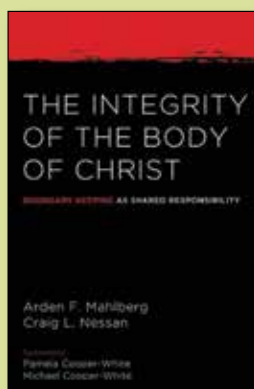
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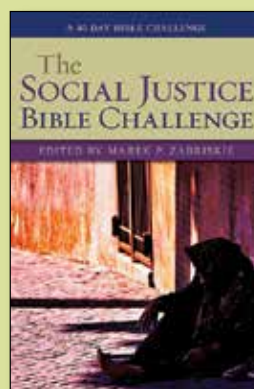
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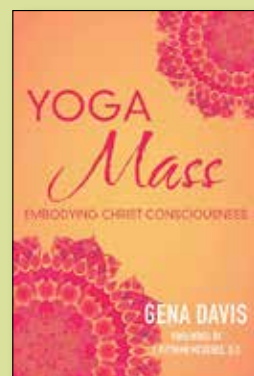
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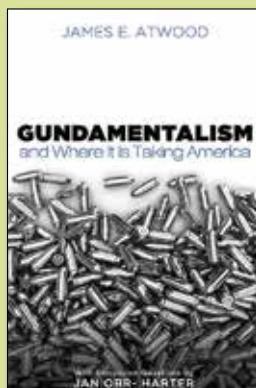
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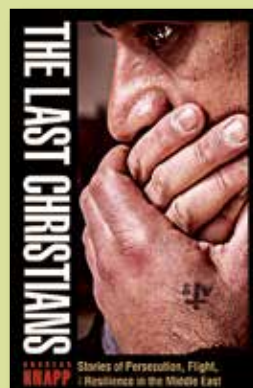


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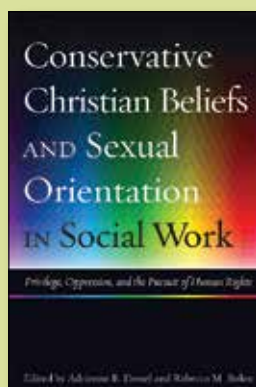


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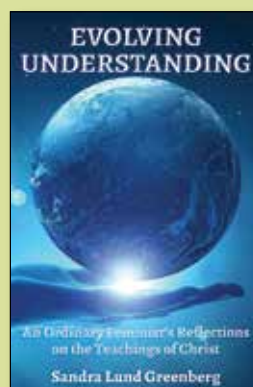


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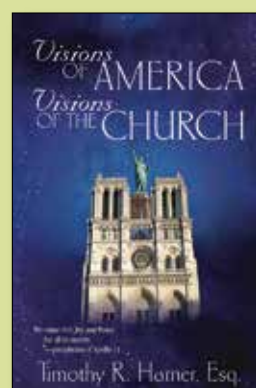


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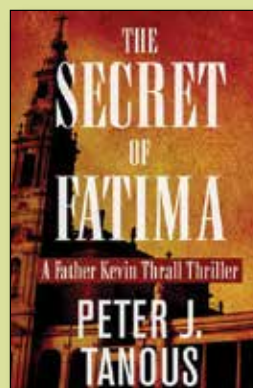


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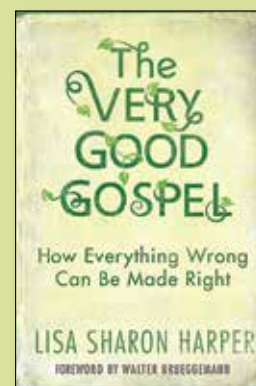


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By Jazmine Steele

Liberation Through **Lamentation**

Waltrina Middleton has found a way to harness the power of pain.

WALTRINA MIDDLETON'S VOICE lifts you to the highest highs with bellows of crisp spoken word. Seamlessly, her croons can plunge you down the rhythm of any blues-laced freedom song. Your heart is gripped with deep, rolling riffs of truth spoken.

Harnessing the power of pain is just one of her many spiritual gifts. Middleton is an ordained minister, activist, and artist with roots in the Gullah Geechee community in South Carolina. A self-professed country girl, she grew up in Hollywood, S.C., on the coastal Gullah Sea Island of Yonges, about 30 minutes outside of Charleston.

"It was beautiful—a swampland with dirt roads, farm, and fields," she told *Sojourners*. "I made my grandparents' hogs my pets before I realized they were actually dinner."

It's been a winding road on the path to self-discovery for Middleton, but she says music was there from the very beginning. "Music was central to our family," she said. "It was an intergenerational medium that brought us together, but also rooted us in our faith."

Her grandparents had 16 children, and all of them could sing or play an instrument. The family put together a group called the Middleton Gospel Singers that toured the local church community. "Part of the country circuit is to have some kind of gospel group," she said. "The women in my family were the instrumentalists. I was always with my

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In Times Like These



Waltrina Middleton
in front of Howard
University's Andrew
Rankin Memorial Chapel in
Washington, D.C.

family when we would be in church all day going to these programs. The whole point was to worship God. It was just something that you did."

Even when there wasn't a church function or performance, Middleton says music was a part of her everyday life. "We had this big ol' barn, and we would be in the barn sitting, rehearsing, and practicing," she said. "Sometimes there would be a fire; sometimes people would just come, listen, and talk. While they were rehearsing, we would sit out there and eat crab."

At these family gatherings, her artistic flair began to take shape. She admired her older cousins and says they heavily influenced her style. "They had this depth to them that I couldn't describe," she said. "It was very low and lamenting. I found myself trying to imitate their style. It also taught me that worship could also be lamenting."

There was something powerful about

lament that Middleton was drawn to. Artists such as Nina Simone and James Baldwin showed her that the expression of pain can be a deeply moving and spiritually renewing experience. She says it is a necessity for her.

"There are people going through pain and suffering; everything is knocked out of them; they can't even cry out," she said. "Who will cry for them? Who will cry *with* them? My lamentation is to help people

"There are people going through pain and suffering. Who will cry for them? Who will cry *with* them?"

understand that we are interconnected. And that for the suffering of one it is my responsibility to cry out."

MIDDLETON FELT the ministry of shared suffering and the expression of pain was definitely a calling. By the time she reached high school, she had perfected the presentation of a Langston Hughes poem, "The Negro Mother." It was there that she met influential teachers, Ms. Singleton and Mr. Ackrum, who helped to develop her oratory skills.

"[Ms. Singleton] helped me with the whole theatrics of telling the story beyond words, with your body," she said. "[Mr. Ackrum] taught me I couldn't do the interpretation with my body if I couldn't comprehend what I was saying. He taught me to understand the message in a more profound way."

In terms of spoken-word performances, Middleton describes herself as a storyteller, not a poet. Her self-identification as a professional artist is a recent development. She attended Howard University, where she majored in political science and theater. She received a master's in nonprofit management with an emphasis in global studies from DePaul University and a Master of Divinity at Chicago Theological Seminary, and worked as national youth advocacy director for the United Church of Christ. Most recently, Middleton was associate dean at Howard's Andrew

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New & Noteworthy



OUR STREETS

Filmmakers Sabaah Folayan and Damon Davis use their backgrounds as activists and artists to create *Whose Streets?*, a gripping documentary about the Ferguson uprising. Through scenes of hope and resistance, *Whose Streets?* reclaims Mike Brown's story and shows Ferguson through the eyes of those who experienced it. whosestreetsfilm.com

EMBRACING THE STRANGER

In *A Better Country: Embracing the Refugees in our Midst*, Cindy M. Wu asks, "How can we [U.S. Christians] be better at loving mercy and doing justice with regard to refugees?" This workbook helps individuals and groups explore this question "theologically and practically." Includes seven lessons and action plan instructions. William Carey Library

A NARRATIVE OF HOPE

In *I Have Learned from the Least: My Life, My Hopes*, Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, archbishop of Manila and renowned theologian, reflects on his vocational journey and topics including religious pluralism, liberation theology in Asia, and an ethic of ecology. Edited by Gerolamo and Lorenzo Fazzini. Orbis Books

SAINTS & SINNERS

Karen Wright Marsh highlights notable believers in *Vintage Saints and Sinners: 25 Christians Who Transformed My Faith*. Featuring lessons from Søren Kierkegaard, Fannie Lou Hamer, Mary Paik Lee, and more, Marsh uses her own faith narrative to reveal that we are not so different from these "vintage saints." InterVarsity Press

Missing Monuments

AS A WHITE native Mississippian, I grew up among Confederate sympathizers. As an adopted Kentuckian, I live among them still. But the news cycles lately have been dominated by some fans of the Confederacy unlike any I've ever seen.

First there were the neo-Nazis in Charlottesville, who purported to defend the honor of Robert E. Lee by chanting slogans such as “Jews will not replace us!” Those twisted and deluded young men and women are ignorant of so much; how could they be expected to know about the thousands of Jewish Confederate soldiers, or the Confederacy’s Jewish attorney general?

Then came President Trump, a New Yorker, going all atwitter about the loss of the “beautiful” [Confederate] statues and monuments in “our cities, towns,

The history I learned was so sanitized that the reason for the war—slavery—rarely came up.

and parks.” Closer to home, our Kentucky governor, Matt Bevin, a right-wing multimillionaire businessman who grew up in New Hampshire, accused Kentuckians who want to remove a statue of Jefferson Davis from our state capitol of a “sanitization of history.” (Bevin later denied he said this—though there is a recording—and asserted that he meant to call these efforts “revisionist.”)

Unlike Bevin, I’ve seen history “sanitized.” When I was growing up in the Mississippi Delta, among white people the “stars and bars” Confederate battle flag seemed at least as popular as the nation’s stars and stripes. There was the usual memorial statue of a generic Confederate soldier in front of the courthouse. And history lessons



Artist's rendering of proposed memorial to African-American lynching victims.

Equal Justice Initiative

about the siege of Vicksburg were especially vivid. Food was so scarce, we learned, that protein-starved residents were reduced to eating rats and boiling shoe leather.

The history I learned was so “sanitized” that the reason for the war—the perpetuation and spread of the enslavement of Africans—rarely came up.

Then, as I rounded the corner into adolescence, things seemed to change. The soldier in front of the courthouse watched as the descendants of slaves took over the government offices inside. Today four of the five members of my native county’s board of supervisors are black, but that soldier is still out there. The stars and bars has been banned from football games at the University of Mississippi, but it is still implanted in the upper left corner of the official state flag.

During my adulthood, I’ve thought long and hard about what we, white Southerners, should do about the legacy of slavery and the Confederacy, and I am certain that honoring it is not one of the options. But if the history of African enslavement in America shouldn’t be honored, neither should it be erased. It can’t be, because its effects—such as racial gaps in wealth, education, and incarceration—haven’t been erased.

The way to deal with the legacy of slavery and the Confederacy is not to honor

it or to erase it, but to fully and honestly recognize it. This can be done. The Germans have done it with their Nazi past, and, while they still have problems, the Germans have fundamentally changed their culture.

The first baby steps toward a similar process have begun with civil rights museums and monuments in some Southern cities. But the positive legacy of the civil rights movement is relatively easy to recognize. The hard part will be facing the individual acts of violence and terror that comprised a slow-rolling, centuries-long war against a captive and oppressed people. This is, for example, what Bryan Stevenson’s Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Ala., is doing with its plans for a national memorial to the more than 4,000 African-American lynching victims EJI has identified.

In the end, if we white Southerners are going to insist on recognizing our Civil War dead, then every such memorial, in every county seat, should be matched with an equally prominent one for those enslaved and brutalized by slavery and its successors. That would be something truly beautiful in America’s cities, towns, and parks.

It would be something like justice. ■

Danny Duncan Collum teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort. He is the author of the novel White Boy.



Continued from Page 37

Rankin Memorial Chapel and is currently expanding her independent global ministry endeavors.

Her work as a minister and activist is rich with accomplishments. She has traveled widely, raising awareness on justice issues and being present with devastated communities. She spent time in Ferguson after the death of Michael Brown; organized vigils in Cleveland (where she was living at the time) after 12-year-old Tamir Rice was shot by police; walked through the streets of favelas pouring libations for slain children with the Mothers of May in Brazil; and spent time with the Native American Lakota community during its fight against the Dakota Access pipeline.

In 2016, she was invited to speak at the World Council of Churches on behalf of her family regarding the murder of

“This was the first time I wasn’t just lamenting someone’s suffering, but was sitting on the mourners’ bench.”

her cousin DePayne Middleton, one of nine people killed by Dylann Roof in the Charleston, S.C. church shooting in 2015. “No one deserves to die that way,” she said. “It’s something I don’t think I will ever get over or understand.”

With the death of her cousin, she found herself in a different place as a minister and advocate. “There was a moment when I got home and saw these fellow activists, and all I could do was cry,” she said. “This was the first time that I wasn’t walking with the family, but *was* the family. This was the first time I wasn’t just lamenting someone’s suffering, but was sitting on the mourners’ bench.”

DePayne was one of the most influential of her older cousins. She recalls memories of DePayne helping her with her hair the night before the first day of high school and going shopping with her for her first bra. “She was just a really beautiful person,” Middleton said. “Her life was God, family, and ministry. Everything she did, I knew



Daniel Craig in *Logan Lucky*

A CAPER FILM WITH MORE

LOGAN LUCKY, the new film from Steven Soderbergh, is a delicious surprise. It’s about working-class Southerners robbing the Charlotte Motor Speedway during a NASCAR race, and its weaving of the intricacies of planning, executing, and living in the post-heist glow is hilarious and even warm.

More than that, it’s a heist film in which ordinary people (not slick, hyper-masculine Armani warriors) employ imagination instead of heavy artillery to take money from an institution that doesn’t need it anyway. The fact that the target of the theft got the money through selling overpriced, undernourishing food and drink is only one piece of bonus philosophical content. It’s a rare thing: a thoroughly entertaining movie with real things to say about the moment it is released. At a time when left-right political division in the U.S. has intensified, Soderbergh, a Southerner who works from New York, has made a red-blue reconciliation comedy.

Some critics have challenged *Logan Lucky* for dealing in what they perceive as stereotypes, but Soderbergh himself has reminded journalists that comedy relies on stereotypes. What matters is *who* the joke is *on*. In *Logan Lucky*, it’s the powerful who are gently mocked (a prison warden who lets prisoners suffer rather than admit imperfections in his system, corporate chiefs who fear liability rules more than they care about their employees). The central characters are of categories usually scorned or

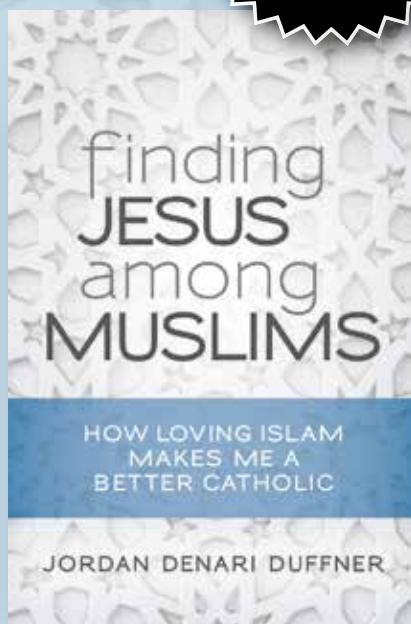
sidelined in mainstream popular culture: an underemployed West Virginia laborer (Channing Tatum), a sassy hairdresser (Riley Keough), and an Iraq vet (Adam Driver) who lost part of an arm in the line of duty but is portrayed neither as pitiable nor aggressive. The water is tainted, the man isn’t hiring, and people are trying to get by, not biting off more than they can chew.

Logan Lucky is about people at the margins seeking their share, no more, with sanity and warmth (even making amends to people they exploited on the way). Its illustration of heartland community culture is subtle: When the national anthem is sung at the start of a race and military jets fly overhead, it’s not a triumphal or bellicose image, and it’s not played for laughs: It just *is*, a part of America in which some folks feel at home, from which some are alienated, about which some others feel judgmental. But it’s *real*, and it’s likely that audiences will be divided between those who feel recognized here and those who feel distant. Look closely and you might see garishness transforming into something more humane and a playful story about, to paraphrase one character, people doing “what they say they’re going to do.” ■

Gareth Higgins is an Irish writer and founder of moviesandmeaning.com and www.irelandretreats.com.

Embrace God's call to interreligious dialogue with Muslims

Why should Christians engage in interfaith dialogue with Muslims? Does Islam have anything to offer Christians? What is Islamophobia, and what should we do about it? Drawing from church teaching, the stories of saints and martyrs, and her extensive personal experiences living among Muslims in both the United States and the Middle East, Duffner explains why all Christians are called to participate in interreligious dialogue, especially with Muslims.



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that I was going to do the same thing. She had an old soul and was always the voice of reason."

A lot of the media blitz that surrounded the Charleston church shooting showed the families of the slain expressing the Christian value of forgiveness for Roof. However, Middleton says there was more to the story. There were extensive family ties for each individual killed—many lives affected by each death—as well as a full spectrum of emotions. Forgiveness was not the only or most prominent sentiment. She says it was frustrating trying to be authentically heard.

"No matter how many times I spoke to journalists, they would listen but they would not speak the truth," she said. "Media will look for their Cinderella story. Don't harm my family and our efforts to seek justice because you need a pretty headline. And it's not even just your headline. It's protecting your interests as well."

SINCE THE DEATH of her cousin, Middleton has connected to activism and the narrative around suffering in a new way. Her work is even more difficult. "Living is hard," she said. "Seeing all these murders messes with your psyche. I have to go through a ritual every morning, without exaggeration, to get out of bed—to put one foot in front of the other."

To cope with her own suffering, she unapologetically uses lament as a healing tool and spiritual discipline. "I don't stop myself from crying," she said. "I probably cry on most days, and if I don't cry I just go with it. Every day I'm pushing to be present, to be resilient, and to believe we can win."

She holds fast to her faith because belief sustains her. God's divine justice is an everyday hope. "I'm not free yet," she said. "Maybe it's the quest for freedom and the peace that comes in that, that helps me to keep going. If this God somewhere will help me to keep pushing until my last breath, then *Ase*, I give thanks."

For Middleton, strength has emerged through the bearing of life's pain. Strength is her witness and her glory. ■

Jazmine Steele is press coordinator for Sojourners.

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Where do we begin? Begin with the heart.

- Julian of Norwich



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Reviewed by Karen Gonzalez

CAUGHT IN-BETWEEN

The Far Away Brothers: Two Young Migrants and the Making of an American Life, by Lauren Markham. Crown.

WITHIN THE FIRST pages of *The Far Away Brothers: Two Young Migrants and the Making of an American Life*, it becomes clear that Lauren Markham understands the complexities of immigration to the United States and has personally worked with immigrants stuck in its tangled web. In a journalistic style, she reports the story of teenage twin brothers Raúl and Ernesto, fleeing gang violence in El Salvador, hoping to find safety and new opportunities in *El Norte*.

Markham has worked in refugee resettlement and immigrant education for the past decade. In this book she covers all aspects of immigration in well-researched detail. But she also seems to understand that while any reader could argue immigration *policy*, no one can argue with the Flores brothers' story, from the crippling poverty in rural El Salvador, where life is cheap and disposable, to the stark loneliness of their lives in the U.S., far from the comforts of family and home.

The book is mainly a narrative of the brothers' immigration journey as unaccompanied minors, but it is interspersed with chapters that describe broader experience for those who dare to cross the border illegally, including the deportation process and repatriation, the unique vulnerabilities of women and girls, and the brutal reality of life in Mexican border cities. Markham sprinkles in facts and statistics about immigration and the mire faced by those seeking to become documented. At times these additions make the book preachy and interfere with the flow of the story, but these are forgivable missteps in an otherwise compelling narrative.

Told in a mostly omniscient voice, the story enables the reader to know the Flores brothers in all their human complexity. This is where the book really finds its stride and

becomes most effective: It does not turn its protagonists into model immigrants, surely a temptation for an immigrant advocate such as Markham. The brothers are at times honorable, kind, and loving and at others proud, impulsive, and given to vices.

Reading between the lines, this is also a story about alienation and loss. And the losses are astronomical—the brothers don't

just lose their country but also their childhood, their family, and, to some extent, their mental health. Few authors deal as extensively with the type of trauma the brothers face in their country, on the journey north, and even once they settle in Oakland, Calif. This is not your father's story of a challenging but triumphant immigrant experience. Even in the relative safety of northern California, the brothers

battle night terrors, depression, and bouts of anxiety, unable to forget the softness of a dead migrant's body they literally stumbled into in the desert, the cavalier violence of the coyote (human smuggler), and mounting fear over the insurmountable debt their parents took on to enable the boys' journey north.

As they build their new lives, the brothers want to belong in their adopted country, even as they willfully skip school and make few American friends. It will be difficult for the reader to remember that the brothers are teenagers with adult problems and responsibilities rather than adults behaving childishly—the word childish came to mind often, and I had to stop and remind myself that they are, indeed, children.

The Far Away Brothers paints a picture of immigrant anxiety, despair, and tenuous hope as it unfolds against the backdrop of the Trump campaign and election. As the author succinctly states, immigrants are

stuck: "The specter of violence down south, the specter of deportation up north, and the mess in between." Indeed, that is our political moment. ■

Karen Gonzalez, an immigrant from Guatemala, is an immigrant advocate and writer. She works for World Relief, which seeks to empower the church to serve the most vulnerable, including refugees and other immigrants.

Reviewed by Greg Williams

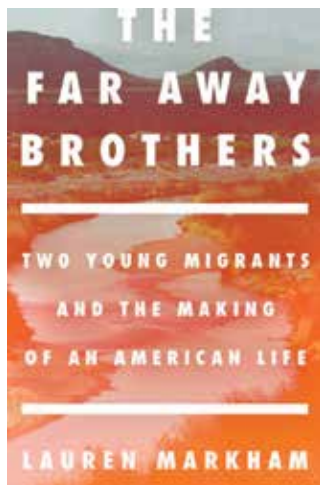
QUESTIONS OF FAITH AND SURVIVAL

When the English Fall: A Novel, by David Williams. Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill.

APOCALYPSE IS IN the air. Perhaps it was the eclipse in August, or the always accelerating churn of foreign and domestic scandal in the news, or the looming threat of climate change. Or perhaps people have always lived this way. But the world feels weighty and close to falling apart, and we start wondering how we would handle the aftermath.

When the English Fall, by David Williams (no relation), examines that possibility: a post-apocalyptic novel about a catastrophe that makes the low-tech, community-minded lifestyle of the Amish the only viable one. We witness the immediate aftermath of the modern life of the English (the Amish name for all non-Amish people) failing due to a solar storm; society is placed under immense stress without the ability to feed itself. In a fantastic choice, this is examined through the life of an Amish farmer named Jacob—how he adapts and the difficult decisions that he must make for his way of life to survive.

The novel is written as Jacob's journal, which drives the style of the book in compelling ways. It enables Williams to incorporate questions of faith and values authentically and focuses the book on the story of this family rather than the broader story of society in crisis (although society's decay is always



looming even before the precipitating crisis).

When *the English Fall* is driven by two substantial ethical decisions: Should Jacob and his family stay on their farm? And how complicit is the family in violence if they do stay?

After the catastrophe, violence begins to grow, coming closer and closer to the family farm. The Amish families give food to the National Guard to be distributed to the English, but supplies soon run short; looters are shot a few roads away; a man next door commits suicide; thieves come to the farm itself and threaten the family. Jacob thinks of leaving as a sacrificial way of embracing martyrdom rather than remaining and allowing the violence to continue, especially violence committed by law enforcement and friends to protect his family.

I'm not sure I buy that. Wouldn't the way of martyrdom be to embrace the struggle of living in a place and the trauma that entails?

Other questions arise: Is state violence simply necessary in our fallen world? Are even the pacifist Amish dependent on it? Does all the breakdown of society in this novel simply reveal what is always a reality?

These substantive ethical questions are one of the virtues of the novel—Williams asks real questions through Jacob's story without allowing us the false comfort of easy answers.

Stylistically, the novel feels voyeuristic. We are reading the journal of an intensely private man and more than that, someone for whom a display of drive and autonomy is itself prideful and sinful. The fact that it is fictional doesn't make the reading experience more comfortable.

That said, Williams does describe religious experience well and sensitively. You see Jacob struggle with his conscience and believe that any conclusion he comes to is born of deep reflection and earnest faith. Even if you come to a different understanding than he does about the core decisions of the novel, you believe his determination is hard-fought. Apocalyptic situations always generate difficult ethical decisions, and Williams deserves praise for not allowing us any easy ways around them. ■

Greg Williams (@gwilliamsster) is communications associate at an advocacy organization in Washington, D.C.

Reviewed by Courtney Hall Lee

DIVERSITY WITH JUSTICE

Intercultural Ministry: Hope for a Changing World, edited by Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Jann Aldredge-Clanton. Judson Press.

MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. once famously said: "It is appalling that the most segregated hour of Christian America is 11 o'clock on Sunday morning." And while Christian people of all varieties have repeated this quote over the years, King's sentiment is still applicable to the U.S. church of 2017.

LifeWay Research, a firm with Southern Baptist roots, performed a study on the problem of segregated worship. According to LifeWay, two-thirds of Americans have never regularly attended a place of worship where they are an ethnic minority. And the secular Pew Research Center states that eight out of 10 U.S. churchgoers worship where a single racial or ethnic group makes up at least 80 percent of the congregation.

For those who desire to change this reality, *Intercultural Ministry: Hope for a Changing World* serves as an encouraging anthology. Editors Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Jann Aldredge-Clanton have assembled 15 diverse voices in ministry to give their contributions to the conversation on increasing diversity and intercultural worship in the American church.

This book of essays is divided into three parts. Part 1, "Building Theological Foundations for Intercultural Churches and Ministries," provides five sharp and insightful essays centering around the book's thesis: the need for the church to champion diversity while dismantling the segregation the church was built on during the United States' precarious racial past.

Part 2, "Strategies for Building Intercultural Churches and Ministries," provides the building blocks for the intercultural church by providing five different takes on enhancing intercultural church practices from experienced ministers with on-the-ground experience. In Chapter 6, Rev. Sheila Sholes-Ross recalls leading an intercultural worship experience on Resurrection Sunday, or Easter, at the First Baptist Church in Pittsfield, Mass. Sholes-Ross describes a service that combined "black contemporary

music" and "traditional Eurocentric anthems." She also describes how the service took careful and intentional planning and marketing to attract an intercultural crowd.

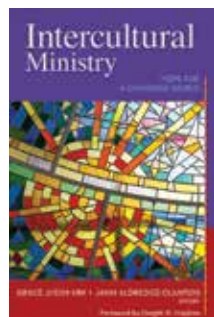
In Part 3, "Future Possibilities of Intercultural Churches and Ministries," we are left with five visions of the church's intercultural future from five ministers who seem truly called to take up the task of integrating the church in an authentic and meaningful way. Each person expresses the challenges of the mission along with stories of practical implementations of change.

The contributing essays each convey the importance of true interculturalism, meaning a church experience that welcomes and includes different cultural expressions of worship. In years past, the problem of segregation in the church has been addressed by an emphasis on assimilation and reconciliation. However, these writers seem to under-

stand that there can be no reconciliation without first finding justice and inclusion. The prescription seems to be to tear down the American church's faulty foundation and rebuild on a foundation of inclusion and oneness while keeping racial, ethnic, and cultural distinctions and identity.

Near the conclusion of the book, Karen Hernández-Granzen, a Trenton, N.J. Presbyterian minister, concludes that achieving the goal of creating truly culturally diverse worshipping bodies requires both *chronos* (the time that passes as the clock ticks away) and *kairos* (the right season or moment for change to take place). *Intercultural Ministry* is full of hope that the *kairos* the church needs will arrive sooner than later. ■

Courtney Hall Lee (@courtrhapsody) is author of *Black Madonna: A Womanist Look at Mary of Nazareth* (Cascade Books), and co-host of the *Dovetail* podcast about the intersections of faith, culture, and social justice.





Rev. Osagyefo Sekou at the 2017 Sojourners Summit

Reviewed by Da'Shawn Mosley

THE PERSONAL IS **PROTEST**

In Times Like These, by Rev. Sekou featuring Luther and Cody Dickinson. Zent Records.

REV. OSAGYEFO Uhuru Sekou's album *In Times Like These* does something I've never witnessed any other recorded musical project do: It sings before track one even begins. Printed on the inside of the album's CD case is one of the most powerful commentaries on the 2016 U.S. presidential election I've read. "The Task of the Artist in the Time of Monsters," written by Rev. Sekou, is simultaneously an artist statement, a poem, and a call to action for the world to engage passionately in "the art of loving and living."

Sekou's album is a rousing sermon that may re-energize social justice activists who listen to it, keeping them engaged in "the movement." At the same time, it's also an extended prayer of sorts, lamenting the wrongs of the world and asking God to alleviate society's pains. "In times like these / we need a miracle," Sekou sings in the chorus of the album's title track, one of the project's standouts.

However, despite his call for divine intervention, Sekou doesn't allow believers in a higher power to sit back and rest assured that God will do the work they should be doing. He completes the chorus of the song "In Times Like These" with the much-appreciated but potentially controversial statement: "Ain't nobody gonna save us / We the ones

we've been waiting for." In a time that calls for bold, social justice-minded commentary from artists, Sekou delivers.

Yet several songs on *In Times Like These* lack soul, their musical compositions being sanctuary-worn clichés. If the lyrics of a song mention God, it always seems to include the whine of an organ. Sekou has absorbed many of the African-American gospel tradition's tropes, but didn't imagine ways to subvert them and innovate a new sound.

If he had paired these familiar melodies with surprising lyrics, with feats of storytelling imbued with intimacy and uniqueness, with tales that hadn't been told before and/or were from his personal experiences—then, perhaps, Sekou might have overcome this pitfall.

Pastors almost universally begin their sermons with a story, however small, from their own life. Like great storytellers, skilled pastors know that specificity creates universality. Sekou—a pastor, theologian, and organizer—didn't keep this truth in mind

as he created *In Times Like These*.

What if he had done so? A glimpse at what his album could have been is the song "Loving You Is Killing Me." The lyrics of the song are surprising due to their subject, which differs from the rest of the

album: It's a breakup song. "If love is a language," Sekou sings, "you don't know how to spell / If love is a story / you don't have one to tell." Later in the song, Sekou sings about planning to pick up the rest of his things from the home

of the unnamed person who broke his heart. The song feels raw; it reminded me of my own conflicted love for this troubled nation.

And at the end of the track, when the music stops, Sekou says to the people who are with him, "Shit, I think we got a record." I agree and disagree. Because while *In Times Like These* is in some ways a brilliant project, "Loving You Is Killing Me" offers a painful reminder of what more it could have been. ■

Sekou doesn't allow believers to sit back and rest assured that God will do the work they should be doing.

Da'Shawn Mosley is assistant editor of Sojourners.

The Longest Season

IN NOVEMBER, the season after Pentecost comes to a close. The church has reflected on the power of its genesis and its spread outward from Jerusalem. The lessons now represent one last opportunity to review the fundamentals before returning to the story of Jesus from its inception. Several of these scriptures communicate the notion that time is running out. Others emphasize the knowledge of who we are in God's sight and who we understand Jesus to be. The season that began with the power of the Spirit breathing a new creation into the world ends this month with an affirmation of sovereignty.

The psalms that weave through this grand story move from the personal prayers of a pious person to the worship of a grateful congregation. The prophets echo each other: God is going to call the world to account *and* God acts to preserve her people. The epistles confess the theology of the ancient church with an urgent zeal, allaying its fear and anxiety about what is to come. The gospels communicate their own urgency. Rather than simply preparing the church to abandon its earthly ship, the gospels call us into relationship with one another, to care for each other as we would care for Jesus in the flesh for however long we tarry here.

The coming seasons of Advent and Christmas are marked by an adoration of the Christ child. But this longest season on the church's calendar bids us to love and serve the Christ that is hardest to see, the one hidden in the flesh of each other.

Wil Gafney is associate professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas.



[NOVEMBER 5]

Respect for Dissent

Micah 3:5-12; Psalm 43; 1 Thessalonians 2:9-13; Matthew 23:1-12

THE SCRIBES AND Pharisees are regularly portrayed as opposing Jesus, while his respect for their teaching and authority is often greatly neglected. His saying in Matthew 23:2-3 is a case in point: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it." Jesus validates the scribes and Pharisees as the legitimate successors to Moses. He accepts their teaching as normative. However, preachers and readers often move straight to the end of verse 3: "but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach." Sermons on the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees are legion, but are not always careful to note the implications of Jesus' disagreement with them over their failure to follow their own teaching.

These verses not only remind us that Jesus was Jewish, but that he respected the scholarship and authority of the scribes—who are more like biblical scholars than copyists, more what we mean contemporarily by "lawyers"—as well as the Pharisees, despite their theological differences. Jesus' affirmation of the Jewish religious and scholarly tradition

as authoritative for his followers is a caution against thinking that Christians are the only legitimate interpreters of scripture.

The relationship between Christianity and Judaism has many painful and shameful chapters marked by anti-Judaism (belief in the inferiority or irrelevance of Judaism), anti-Semitism (hostility toward and bias against Jews), and supersessionism (the notion that Christians have replaced Jews as God's people). It is useful to remember that Jesus never rejected his Jewish identity or heritage, and was a religiously observant Jew even as he inaugurated a movement that would become a new religion.

Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees were part of the same religious tradition but interpreted scripture differently and had significantly divergent theological understandings. This has implications for how we engage contested issues in Christianity today. Jesus' insistence that his followers respect the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees remains as "red words," the words of Jesus in the gospels to us.

[NOVEMBER 12]

My Sister's Keeper

Amos 5:18-24; Psalm 70; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13

WISE AND FOOLISH virgins (or "bridesmaids") in Matthew 25 are object lessons, teaching what the reign and realm of God is like. ("Bridesmaids" is a poor translation. There is no bride in the story and no indication they were to attend a bride.) The parable is about the consequences for failing to prepare and the rewards for preparing appropriately, and welcome to or rejection from the wedding feast that symbolizes the reign and realm of God.

The text uses the categories of "wise" and "foolish" for women who bring or forget extra oil, indicating who is to be emulated. I suggest that though the wise women make it in to the feast and therefore into God's reign, they are *not* paragons of virtue. They are, in a word, selfish. They operate from a paradigm of scarcity—there *may* not be enough for all of them, so they refuse to share.

Scarcity is certainly one way to think about resource allocation; however, it is not the only one. Sadly, this is a normative model for far too many Christians: "There's not enough. I don't have enough to share. You're on your own." The lack of sistering and solidarity among the women—and from the groom—seems at odds with the larger gospel and contradicts the message of other passages. For this reason, as a womanist, I resist this text and its normative reading. I see some other options: The women could have traveled together with the torches and oil they had, even if some torches went out. They could have lit fewer torches and rationed the oil. They could have said they would not leave anyone behind or in the dark.

There is an overlooked aspect of this text. It is often assumed the groom denied the women entrance because they lacked oil. He did not. The door to the realm of God was open to them, but they went instead to buy something that would not grant them admission anyway.

"Preaching the Word," Sojourners' online resource for sermon preparation and Bible study, is available at sojo.net/ptw.

[NOVEMBER 19]

Time's Almost Up!

Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18; Psalm 90:1-12;
1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Matthew 25:14-30

IT'S THE END. The day of reckoning in Zephaniah: "The great day of the Holy One is near, near and hastening fast" (1:14). The reading ends before the promise, much later in the book, that some will indeed be spared—"I will leave in the midst of you a people humble and lowly" (3:12). The day to end all days is at hand; just around the corner. Time is running out. The psalmist pleads, "Teach us to number our days" (Psalm 90:12).

Zephaniah's urgency is shared by many who read the signs of the times in the face

Jesus never rejected his Jewish identity.

of the earth. While the reading focuses on human beings, our fate is inexorably tied up with the fate of plants and animals on this planet, the planet itself, and its eco-systems and climate. Some contemporary environmental prophets cry out, much as Zephaniah did, that we are reaching a point of no return, that if we do not change our ways the bulk of us may not survive the coming cataclysm.

The Bible has an ample supply of "end of the world" texts and offers several perspectives and responses. The return of Jesus as a "thief in the night" (1 Thessalonians 5:2) is one such text. It offers the comfort that "whether we are awake or asleep" when that day comes, we will be fine because we will be with Jesus. For many Christians, personal assurance of salvation and vindication on the day of judgment are all that matter. But what about the rest of the world?

Christians have been waiting for the return of Jesus, the day of judgment, and the end of the world (before its remaking) for more than 2,000 years. But until that happens, we live here, on this planet. It's the only one we have, and we do not know whether it will be another 2,000 years before Jesus returns. What is our responsibility to this planet, its creatures, and the water and air on which we all rely?

[NOVEMBER 26]

Woman-Born

Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24; Psalm 95:1-7a;
Ephesians 1:15-23; Matthew 25:31-46

SON OF WOMAN. The one aspect of Jesus' birth that Christians and non-Christians agree on is that his mother was human. There is a diversity of belief about his paternity, but that Jesus was born of a woman is not in dispute. It is in his mother's womb that he receives his humanity.

What is disputed by some (in and out of the church) is whether Jesus' father was human or indeed God. So there is no small degree of irony in the translation of *huios tou anthropou* as "Son of Man" (used extensively in Matthew's gospel), particularly since it can be just as easily translated as "Son (or Child) of Woman," "Human Child (Son/One)," "Mortal One," or even "human being," as the corresponding Hebrew and Aramaic expressions are translated throughout the scriptures. (See Numbers 23:19, Psalm 144:3; Isaiah 51:12; Ezekiel 2:1, and Daniel 7:13. Also note that the King James Version uses "son of man" throughout both testaments while the New Revised Standard Version reserves it for the New Testament.)

The expressions *huios tou anthropou* (Greek), *ben adam* (Hebrew), and *bar enosh* (Aramaic, in Daniel 7:13) point to two very different beings. On the one hand, the emphasis is on humanity and the mortality that defines it, making it God's primary address for Ezekiel (Ezekiel 3:10, 17; 11:4; 20:3). On the other hand, there is a being who may have the general appearance of a human but has abilities far beyond humanity, associated with the clouds and heaven (Daniel 7:13).

In Jesus, *both* meanings come together. Jesus is born of woman, therefore human and mortal. He is also beyond humanity and has his own claim on heaven. In Matthew 25, the woman-born Jesus speaks of his return in glory with the angels (verse 31). He who is Son of God and Son of Woman will judge all based on how we have treated the woman-born (verses 34-45). Whatever we have done or not done for the least among the women-born, we have done or not done for Jesus, the Son of Woman. ■



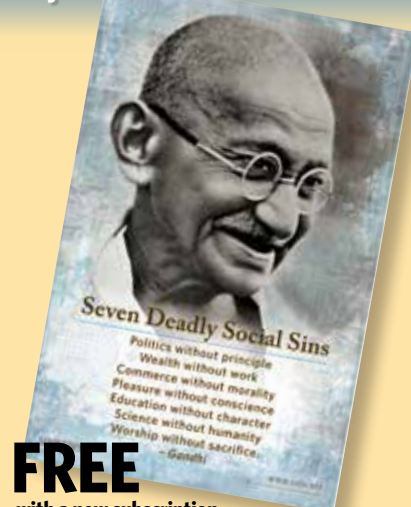
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High Anxiety

THERE ARE FEW times in life when we experience absolute clarity.

Normally, with the unrelenting rush of time, we live more from a sense of accidental encounter than with a plan, our decisions prompted by necessity instead of resolve. When that pattern is interrupted by an unexpected revelation, we stop and take note.

Recently, I experienced such a moment, a searing flash of certainty that changed the direction of my life: Under no circumstances will I ever walk on a high wire.

This summer's Folklife Festival in D.C. featured the Flying Wallendas, a family of circus performers with a 200-year-old legacy of defying death high above ground uncluttered by unsightly things, such as nets. They perform in massive arenas, including three-ring circuses (circi?), their legendary mental focus undisturbed by the elephants on their left or zany clown cars to their right.

The Folklife Festival, however, presented more of a challenge to their concentration since, at any given time, no fewer than eight different venues—each with its own



was an ill-chosen snack. Then a loud voice broke through the tension:

"What you want to do is brown your ground beef first, then set it aside."

As the young woman continued her treacherous walk above the anxious people below (including my granddaughter and me), the voice reconsidered:

"Although some people brown their beef second. It's really a personal preference."

Later, the patriarch of the family—an elderly man with broad shoulders and a disconcerting but unexplained bandage on his hand—balanced a chair at the top of a five-person human pyramid which, foolishly in my view, also included two bicycles! As beads of sweat gathered on his forehead, a slight quivering began in his arms, visibly gravitating down into the five bodies of his colleagues. While the troupe struggled to hold its balance on the high wire, the voice continued with its latest epiphany:

"And then, after the beef is browned, I put it in a ceramic bowl."

Somehow, and to the palpable relief of the crowds (who, to a person, vowed never again to attend such a display; I mean, why encourage this sort of thing?!), the Wallenda Family made it across the wire and ... NO, WAIT! DON'T MOVE BACKWARD TO THE

OTHER SIDE!! IT'S FINE! WE'RE ENTERTAINED. JUST GET DOWN ALREADY!!

"Though a plastic bowl will work just as well"

When it was finally over and our hearts had started beating again, my granddaughter turned to me and very seriously said, "Don't ever do that." This was touching but unnecessary, since I had already made an unspoken pact with gravity to not challenge it in any way. Feet on the ground at all times, is my motto. I won't even jump to conclusions.

And for what it's worth, I'm totally off ground beef.

NEVER WALKING a tightrope was the second of two moments of clarity this summer, the other being my decision not to work in the Trump White House. I hadn't imagined the possibility, of course, given my complete lack of qualification for government employment. But as the executive branch started hemorrhaging people in August—people who could not have been less qualified for their jobs in the first place—I realized it was only a matter of time before my incompetence would attract attention. My poor time-management and people skills would shine like beacons of eligibility to White House human resources; my well-proven ineptitude a clarion call to service. Heck, with my long history of failure, they'd probably make me a department head. How could they not? I've got what it doesn't take.

Don't get me wrong. I have tremendous respect for the office of the presidency, but mainly the furniture and that great rug. I just don't have the capacity to serve in high office. After this summer, I'm staying close to the ground ■

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of Sojourners.

I made an unspoken pact with gravity to not challenge it in any way.

blaring sound system—were competing for attention. While Wallenda family members walked across a high wire with no net, an amplified voice from a demonstration in the next tent spoke of culinary techniques for outdoor cooking. The contrast was disturbing.

Young Sacha Wallenda walked carefully to the middle of the wire, then turned a rapid 180 degrees, her balance disrupted by a strong breeze and regained only after a terrifying wobble that caused the audience to gasp and, in some cases, aspirate cotton candy which, in hindsight,

Ken Davis



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